Seyda Subasi Singh
Olja Jovanović
Michelle Proyer (eds.)

Perspectives on Transitions in Refugee Education

Ruptures, Passages, and Re-Orientations



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Preface

The edited book "Perspectives on Transitions in Refugee Education: Ruptures, Passages, and Re-Orientations" aims to shed light on the different transitions that refugees are facing in their lives and the intersections among these different transitions and refugee education. Here, we will discuss the key concepts on which the book was built and their alternative meanings emerging from the complexity and diversity of current refugee education policy and practices.

Who are the refugees?

We argue that the vital part of the refugee experience is a transition to the role of a refugee, i.e. the process of becoming a refugee. This transition could be conceptualized as a *rupture* in the attachment to a familiar place, familiar life, and familiar self; a search for *passages* towards 'good enough' environments (Anderson, 2004) amid ambiguity and uncertainty; and a process of *re-orienting* the self in an unfamiliar space. This transition is always experienced as enforced, no matter if we are talking about former Yugoslavia in the '90s, Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan in recent years or Ukraine in 2022.

Although refugees are a legally and constitutionally well-defined group of people (Anderson et al., 2004), the psychological borders of this group are rather ambiguous. The globalisation, changes in the nature of protracted conflicts and the increasing number of refugees in the last decades, raise questions related to the refugee identity, but at the same questions that should influence the way, refugee education is (re)shaped.

According to the UNHCR (UNHCR, n.d.), more than 5.6 million individual refugees from Ukraine were recorded across Europe from 24 February to 1 August 2022. The newly displaced have joined millions who have remained refugees for decades, from ongoing conflicts in Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, or Myanmar. At the end of 2021, 27.1 million people lived as refugees globally, around half of whom were under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2022). Having in mind the onset and reignition of conflicts across the globe, resulting in the constantly increasing number of refugees, we could question if the refugee crises could be described as an unexpected event or if it has become an integral part of the global landscape. Moreover, the size of the refugee population could call into question the **minority status** of refugees. However, research in social psychology shows that the size of

the group is only one of the sociostructural variables which contribute to patterns of intergroup behaviors (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). Among other sociocultural variables that are relevant for the minority status, literature mentions power and counternormative stance (Seyranian, Atuel & Crano, 2008). Research on discrimination and structural disadvantages faced by refugees in host countries, particularly in the education context, shows that the status of minorities is unfortunately still describing the most dominant experiences among this population (e.g. Dryden-Peterson, 2015a). These different dimensions of the minority status of refugees highlight the need for a sociopolitical approach to refugee education which pays attention to post-migration conditions and issues of power structures, discrimination and resilience (Matthews, 2008).

The second, as Dryden-Peterson (2015b, 2017) describes, critical for refugee education is that conflict and conflict-induced displacement are becoming increasingly protracted: in 2014, the average length of exile was 25 years. The change in the nature and/or perception of the conflict from short-lived to protracted has important implications for refugee education. Assuming that the future of refugees will likely be out of the country of origin, the purpose of refugee education cannot solely be defined as providing continuity in the educational trajectories, but it has to "prepare refugees for transnational futures with transferable skills, knowledge, and capacities that they could apply no matter where that future might be" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019, p. 351). Moreover, the prolonged role of a refugee suggests that refugee identities can be **salient** for a long time, and it becomes increasingly important how the educational environment will shape this identity and what other identities will be available for a child.

The third point is that refugees are a rather **heterogeneous group** – in the sense of their other identities, experiences, capacities, similarities and differences. Depending on the type of crises they have experienced certain questions will also prevail in a new context (e.g. minority status). The authors in the field of refugee education have argued that presenting refugees as a homogeneous group and focusing solely on the post-migration factors and educational experiences has prevented a more thorough understanding of pre-migration and trans-migration factors and experiences of refugees which are relevant to understanding their particular needs and developing appropriate educational support (Dryden-Peterson, 2015a, 2016a; Anderson et al., 2004). Moreover, a homogenized view of refugees coupled with minority status could lead to negative stereotyping and neglect of an individual's resilience, resourcefulness and strength (Matthews, 2008). The previous experiences affect the way refugee children experience school and the relationships they have with teachers and peers. As Dryden-Peterson (2015, p. 1) describes, "however, the histories of resettled refugee children are often hidden from their teachers and other school staff in the United States by factors such as

language barriers, privacy concerns, cultural misunderstandings, and stereotypes." Building refugee education on awareness of the heterogeneity of refugees is a step towards more individualized support measures that take into account the diversity of refugee life histories and futures.

What is the role of transition in the refugee experiences?

We argue that a transition is a central feature of the refugee experience. According to Anderson et al. (2004, p. 9), refugees experience two major transitions that can have a profound impact on their lives: "First, the flight from their home country, which in some cases is prolonged and characterized by extreme deprivation and traumatic experiences; and second, their arrival, at a time when their personal resources are low, in a host country which often differs radically from that to which they are accustomed". However, being a refugee means being in a constant move between not just geographical, but also cultural, institutional and/or psychological places and spaces.

Chapters in this book are primarily concerned with factors that impact refugee children's ability to manage these transitions into a new country and, in particular, into a new educational context. The transitions to and within the educational context enable refugee students to participate in new practices, learn new social rules, build social networks, meet new demands, and thus generate new experiences. These experiences are influenced by diverse premigration trajectories (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a), but also by rules, regulations, and responses of micro and macro agents, such as local communities, institutions, national governments and globalized actors. As Rutter (2006) noted, it is not 'refugeeness' that determines the success of these transitions but the ways that particular and pre-, trans- and post-migration issues and needs are identified and addressed.

What is the role of education in the transitions of refugees?

Refugee education is a term characterized by multiple understandings and the myriad of local practices (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). However, what is considered to be a central aspect of refugee education is that it is education aimed at responding to the present needs and visions of the future of refu-

gees. Therefore, as the understanding of the diversity and status of refugees, and knowledge of diverse trajectories and outcomes of migrations have changed, the purpose of refugee education has changed as well. On the one hand, it becomes obvious that migration trajectories of refugees are rarely planned and straightforward, they are rather non-linear and complex permutations of migration, exile, and consistently re-imagined futures (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Moreover, they become enacted in the global context characterized by constant changes and mobility within and across national contexts. Therefore, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019) argue that next to resettlement to a distant country; return to the country of origin; or long-term integration in the host country, the future of refugees could also reflect transnational life paths. The role of refugee education against the future of transnationalism would be to equip students with tolerance to uncertainty and with transferable competencies that they could apply across the contexts. Moreover, it requires refugees to negotiate their relationship with the language, culture and identity of the country of origin, but at the same time opens up possibilities of global citizenship as a means of realizing rights and creating spaces of belonging (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b).

Refugee education, moreover, brings a need for re-orienting nation-states and global agents in the context of protracted refugee crises. As Benhabib (2004, cited in Pinson & Arnot, 2007) observes, the human rights approach recognizes citizenship as a needless concept. Therefore, states have to face the decision of whether an individual's rights, such as the right to education, should continue to be distributed according to citizenship or according to personhood (ibid).

And, finally, although refugee education has some distinctive features emerging from the nature of refugee students' life experiences and knowledge, such as intensive support in language acquisition, cultural mediation, psycho-social support services, the shift towards membership in a school, local and national community calls for a whole-school approach. Regarding the UK context, Arnot and Pinson (2005), recognize good practice schools as those that had 'an ethos of inclusion' and a 'celebration of diversity, 'a caring ethos and the giving of hope'. Therefore, refugee education is increasingly becoming recognized as oriented towards developing inclusive learning communities, in which diversity is valued and both refugee students and their peers build a positive image of the self and others.

We argue that the role of refugee education is to support the transformation of life course *ruptures* into transitions between past and future, to shed light on *passages* towards membership in diverse communities, and to mediate the *re-orientation* of educational policy and practices having in mind the evolving identities of refugees in a changing world.

The scope of conflicts in the latest years has shown that each of us is a potential refugee. It calls upon educational authorities and policymakers to go

a few steps back before the point in time in which refugee education becomes needed and to rethink what kind of education we need so we could have societies in the future in which armed conflict is not the way to solve disputes, disagreements or satisfy its own interests.

This preface represents a map of key issues emerging from the intersection of transitional processes experienced by refugees and refugee education, while each chapter tackles some of these issues and contributes to envisioning alternative futures of refugee education. Most of the chapters in this book stem from the webinar 'Cross-border Perspectives on Refugee Education' which took place in the scope of Erasmus+ Project ITIRE. The discussion of this webinar pointed to the urge of taking a closer look at the national refugee education contexts.

Seyda Subasi Singh
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Introduction

In this edited book, we focus on the educational transitional experiences of refugees in different countries and regions of the world. Thanks to the diversity of contexts, methodological perspectives and data sources, the book provides a very comprehensive overview of the experiences that refugees have while resettling and trying to get included in a new context.

The first chapter tackles how Norwegian and Finnish Education Acts contribute to the educational equity for refugee children in compulsory education. In this chapter, the authors rely on document analysis and aim at deepening our understanding of how and if education acts ensure the educational rights of refugee children. In the second chapter, the educational rights of a partly invisible group, refugees with disabilities, are analysed both at the document level and based on the empirical data from field studies. This chapter provides a critical look at the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with an inclusive and intersectional perspective. How refugees with disabilities remain invisible and neglected in practice but also at the international policy level is presented well in this chapter. In the next chapter, we have a descriptive overview of the Turkish context relying on a synthesis of the literature to identify ad hoc educational policy changes that progress towards mainstreaming forced immigrants into public education. As a transit but also high-receiving country, Turkey has had to go through several changes at the policy and practice levels. This chapter provides us with a picture of measures taken to ensure the continuation of education for refugee children. In the fourth chapter, a qualitative longitudinal study presents an analysis of newly arrived immigrants' prospective and retrospective narratives of their educational pathways. The authors examine the multiple transitions that take place over time and how the aspirations and trajectories of this group are transformed and evolve. The fifth chapter, on the other hand, concentrates on unaccompanied minors in the French political and administrative context and relies on individual cases to reach the experiences during and after migration. The narratives of the unaccompanied minors explain how they reorient their lives and how they experience their migration journey. In the sixth chapter, an educational intervention for cultural well-being from Australia is presented. The Tri-Menu Model of Learning (TMM) that emerged during the Navigating Resettlement Project (NR) in Western Sydney Australia is introduced with implications for the social, cultural and creative needs of young refugees during resettlement. The next chapter also presents educational research that took place in a resettlement context. The seventh chapter reports from two refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq where a study focused on adolescent girls whose education has been disrupted upon departing Syria.

The experienced geographical transitions, social transitions, and educational transitions are documented through ethnographic techniques.

Starting with the eighth chapter, we are taking a closer look at the school context in different countries. The eighth chapter reports on an ethnographic study with educators in Turkey. This study reveals how educators perceive the transitional experiences of refugee children in the Turkish school context. The ninth chapter, similarly, relies on the perceptions of teachers and teacher educators from Austria, Denmark, Norway and the UK to draw a picture of how refugee education takes place in these countries and how teachers and teacher educators make meaning of their experiences with refugee children. The next chapter presents a comparison of German and Italian contexts to explore how transitions of newly arrived students are negotiated and thematised at the level of interaction in school organisation. The study reveals how newly arrived students are addressed differently from mainstream students in terms of performance expectations.

The eleventh chapter is the first of the four chapters that tackle the parents' perspective on the education of refugee children. This chapter contributes to the discourse on refugees and educational transition, with a specific focus on the engagement of parents from refugee backgrounds after resettlement in Australia. The chapter discusses how resettlement sets in motion a process of transition, impacting not only refugee families who move to Australia but also the educators and others from the Australian school community. The next chapter presents a study from the Greek context which has experienced substantial changes due to refugee movements. This study shows how refugee parents and their children face major problems in their transition from their country to Greece due to xenophobia, racism and the lack of job opportunities and how these affect the schooling process. The thirteenth chapter explores various aspects of transitions, such as role transitions, educational transitions and sociopolitical transitions and their intersections by relying on the data from refugee families. This study shows what transitions, opportunities and challenges the refugee families experience in the Icelandic context. The fourteenth chapter reports from the Irish context and relies on the perspectives of parents to understand the schooling experiences of children from a migrant background in Ireland. The ethnographic study highlights the transitional challenges confronting migrant families as they navigate the Irish education system. Among these challenges are children's experiences of isolation, bullying and stereotypes, complacent teacher attitudes and difficulties in building friendships with children from different backgrounds.

The last chapter, on the other hand, reports on Vietnamese refugees' linguistic, cultural, social, and educational experiences and perceptions with a longitudinal perspective. The qualitative study indicates how the Vietnamese

refugees who have lived in Iceland for forty years have settled and adapted to Icelandic society despite many challenges throughout the years in Iceland.

We hope that readers will find the chapters in this book thought-provoking and informative. We thank all authors for their contributions that offer us a new perspective on refugee education.

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Substantive equality of refugee children in Education Acts of Finland and Norway

Mariya Riekkinen and Natallia Bahdanovich Hanssen

1 Introduction

1.1 Refugee children's right to education

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the UN Refugee Convention) proclaimed that access to primary education is the basic minimum standard for the treatment of refugees. Art.22 of this Convention guarantees that refugees should be accorded "the same treatment as is accorded to nationals concerning elementary education". Granting all children, the right to education was later established as a human right by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). UN CRC obligates states to recognize the right to compulsory education which "should be achieved based on equality of opportunity" (Art.28). The rights set forth by the UN CRC belong to every child, irrespectively of status (Art.2). Thus, states should respect the equality principle in education, taking active measures to counteract discrimination and "guarantee substantive equality" (Verheyde 2006). Substantive equality of refugee children in education is especially relevant in the light of the scientific debate on education rights as an extension of national social rights, initiating the discourse on 'otherness' (Benhabib 2004) where exclusion of 'others' "is crucial for concrete personhood and citizenship" (Migliarini 2018, pp. 52).

The problem of achieving substantive equality for refugee children in education is a part of a greater issue of implementing the right to education nationally (ibid.). On the one hand, the UN CRC had shifted the entitlements of refugee children to education "from humanitarian intervention to a human right" (ibid, pp. 53). On the other hand, research shows that the refugee children are treated as refugees first and children second (Arnot et al. 2013; Pinson et al. 2010). This highlights the urgency of approaching the education of refugee children from the perspective of educational equality and the role of the states in the latter (Pinson and Arnot 2007).

1.2 Explaining the contexts

We study education acts in Finland and Norway to answer the following question: How do these acts contribute to the substantive equality of refugee children in compulsory education? We remain aware that there is no difference in the treatment of refugee children and other pupils with an immigrant background in compulsory education. We also remain aware of the existing critique of special measures introduced by states to boost refugee education, to which instruction in separate groups has traditionally been provided. Research shows that such measures can lead to segregation in education (Fratzke et al. 2021; Vergou 2019) and may exert an adverse effect on participation in work life and society at large (Masoud, Holm and Brunila 2021; Olwig 2012).

We place our analysis within the Nordic education systems. The recent figures show that in Finland refugee children aged 0-17 comprise 608 individuals in a 2021 quota refugee selection in March 2015, i.e. not before the influx of refugees from Ukraine ended (Migri 2021) out of 312,919 individuals aged 0-14 in Finland in 2020 (Statistics Finland 2020. In Norway refugee children aged 0-15 comprised 20,607 individuals in 2021 (SSB 2021) out of 924,613 individuals aged 0-15 by 1 January 2022 (SSB, Population by Age 2021). When it comes to education, Nordic educational systems are known for the overall aim of ensuring the right to education as equally available to all, regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, wealth, migration background, disability, or place of residence (Hausstätter and Vik 2021; Ström and Sundqvist 2021).

The shared features justifying comparisons between Finland and Norway are manifold: sharing a long history of advancing equality, and adopting legislation that stipulates the principle of free and compulsory basic education for all (Harju-Luukkainen and McElvany 2018; Kortekangas 2017). Moreover, both states ratified the UN Refugee Convention and UN CRC, which explicitly defines the obligations toward all children, as reflected in the documents of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM, 2030). Our focus on two similar, yet still different Nordic jurisdictions is a response to the increasing need to study discourses on a national level for enacting the right to education of refugee children (Migliarini 2018, pp. 49).

1.3 Refugee children in education in Finland and Norway

This section explains differences regarding the position of refugee children in education in both states under consideration. Finland has “relatively fewer

children with immigrant backgrounds" (Arvola et al. 2017, pp. 2539). The official population statistics do not specify the number of refugee children according to the background but show in general terms the figures of underaged individuals in Finland who were born abroad (Statistics Finland 2020). Finland, being an EU member state, is "closely aligned" with the EU with priorities on migration, resettlement, and asylum, supporting joint EU actions within its resettlement quota (Fratzke et al. 2021, pp. 69).

As for the legal regulation of compulsory education for refugee children, it is derived from the constitutional right of everyone to obtain compulsory education. The right and obligation to acquire compulsory education under the Finnish Constitution should not be "precluded by economic hardship" (Constitution of Finland Sec.16). The rules for providing compulsory education are guaranteed by the 2018 Basic Education Act (the BEA). The education of refugee children follows the 2014 National Curriculum on Basic Education. The refugee children have the right to special assistance in education, such as the so-called "preparation for basic education", meaning up to 900 hours of specialized instruction in languages and other subjects, an option to choose Finnish or Swedish as a second language, native language education, and supported teaching and education provided in the pupils' native languages. Arranging special preparatory education for refugee children is subject to the discretion of the municipalities (BEA Sec.5), leading to a lack of a unified national program for placing newly arrived children in special classes. In 2009, a specific "National Core Curriculum of Instruction, Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education" was introduced for those children who did not have sufficient Finnish or Swedish language skills to study at the basic educational level (Torslev and Børsch 2019).

Although Norway opted not to join the EU, it is considered by the UN Refugee Agency to be "at the global forefront in championing the right of refugee children to get quality education." (UN Refugee Agency 2016). Since 2015, Norway was among the five countries, alongside France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom which accepted "approximately two-thirds of all refugees who were resettled to Europe" (Fratzke et al. 2021, pp. 67).

Following the 1998 Education Act (the EA) Sec.2.8, refugee children, like other children with an immigrant background, can benefit from many additional rights associated with their language and origin. They are entitled to the so-called "adapted instruction" in the Norwegian language, meaning a special approach to learning Norwegian as a second language until they are sufficiently proficient in the language to follow the normal instruction of the school. Upon arrival in Norway, all children must learn a new language and adapt to a new society. Recently arrived children are usually not included full-time in mainstream education and might attend introductory classes, groups, or schools before they join mainstream classes with other students of the same age (EA Sec.2.8). Since EA does not clarify how the "adapted lan-

guage education" should be organized and implemented, municipalities and pedagogical staff are free to find suitable solutions for implementing instruction themselves (Dørum and Hanssen 2018).

1.4 Theoretical framework

The idea of substantive equality was derived from the general notion of equality, which is "a central commitment in human rights law" (Fredman 2016, pp. 712). Understanding this concept more fully requires juxtaposing formal equality, on the one hand, and substantive equality in the treatment of individuals by law, on the other hand (Fredman 2011). Formal proclamations of equality in legislation meet the idea of neutrality and freedom from arbitrariness (Charilaos 2015, pp. 15). Substantive equality is not neutral, as it implies taking measures to overcome special barriers in ensuring human rights, associated with someone's pre-given status. In today's democratic societies, formal equality alone is not sufficient to balance the socio-economic disadvantages that the most vulnerable groups face in pursuing human rights (Brodsky and Day 2002).

Academicians still argue about the exact definition of substantive equality (Fredman 2016, pp. 712). Scholars have commonly accepted that the principle of equality in law does not prevent arbitrary asymmetrical treatment (ibid). The core of substantive equality is multidimensional, extending the principle of equal treatment to everyone, and should be "responsive to those disadvantaged" (ibid, pp. 713). Thus, the most robust working definition of substantive equality is as follows: "A legal principle that sometimes allows or mandates status-based differential treatment aimed at the emancipation of discriminated social categories" (Dupont 2016, pp. 291).

To ascertain how the analysed acts ensure substantive equality for refugee children in compulsory education, the four-dimensional approach suggested by Sandra Fredman (2016) appears to be the most fruitful. Saying a few words about Fredman, a human rights lawyer, and a scholar, we cannot fail to mention that it was she who authored numerous works on comparative human rights and equality and founded the organization named Oxford Human Rights Hub, aiming at bringing together academics, practitioners, and policy-makers to promote equality and protect human rights. Fredman's understanding of substantive equality comprises the following dimensions: redressing disadvantage; addressing stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence; enhancing voice and participation; accommodating difference, and achieving structural change (Fredman 2016). These dimensions can also be summed up as redistribution, recognition, participation, and transformation (ibid). As "affirmative action", redistribution "advances substantive equality

by taking steps to redress the disadvantage" (ibid, pp. 729). It also relates to resources, including representation in employment and holding property. Recognition implies eliminating stigma, stereotyping, humiliation, and violence, all based on pre-given status. Transformation implies doing away with practices leading to the adverse effects of pre-given differences and achieving structural change, all of which should result in accommodating diversity in society rather than "requiring members of out-groups to conform to the dominant norm" (ibid, pp. 733). Participation refers to the inclusiveness of groups in those decision-making spheres in which they have traditionally been underrepresented (Fredman 2016) and "addressing the importance of community in the life of individuals" (ibid, pp. 732).

1.5 Method

We rely on document analysis, aiming at deepening our understanding of how our education acts ensure substantive equality for refugee children in compulsory education. The analyzed documents are The 1998 Basic Education Act with subsequent amendments, the most recent of which is of 11 March 2022 –the BEA in Finland and the 1998 Education Act with subsequent amendments, the most recent of which is of 19 June 2020 –the EA in Norway. The principal method of this study employs the comparative law method, based on the so-called "functionalist" approach (which aims at comparing the function or the social purpose of legal rules, which, in our case, guarantees substantive equality), which is also a "problem-solution" comparative technique (Brand 2007, pp. 409). We had already defined the problem that the laws have to solve, i.e., refugee children have the right to compulsory education, which should be implemented from the perspective of substantive equality. Then we move on to "listing, explaining, and evaluating" the similarities and differences between the solutions (ibid). Accounting for similarities and differences is performed with the help of deductive qualitative content analysis (Elo and Kyngös 2008). Fredman's (2016) main dimensions of substantive equality are used as categorization frames.

2 Results

The findings of this study are organized according to Fredman's dimensions (redistribution, recognition, transformation, and participation), thereby con-

stituting the profiles of the chosen documents' treatment of substantive equality.

2.1 Redistribution

The working definition of redistribution, according to Fredman, entails action aimed at targeting the disadvantage caused by refugee status and redistributing public goods to assist refugee pupils in compulsory education.

The BEA in Finland does not directly articulate clear rules regarding the redistribution of public goods in the name of assisting refugee children. Reference to redistribution can be found in BEA Sec.20, indicating that when a pilot educational program is launched, schools eligible for participating in these programs "shall be chosen, to be as representable in regional and linguistic terms as possible". This implies preferential treatment of schools with special linguistic profiles. BEA Sec.10 allows for the possibility of obtaining education in one's own mother tongue in separate groups or even in schools.

The Norwegian EA Sec.2-6 indicates that "the municipality may decide that instruction in and through the medium of sign language will be provided at a different location from the local school". The possibility of organizing special educational facilities in separate groups, classes, or schools for pupils with immigrant backgrounds in general, may be regarded as another means of redistributing public goods to assist refugee children in compulsory education.

2.2 Recognition

Applying Fredman's concept, a working definition of recognition can be formulated as follows: removing arbitrary discrimination aimed at eliminating stereotyping, humiliation, and violence, based on the status of refugee children in compulsory education.

The BEA in Finland approaches recognition, employing general proclamations and prohibitions with no specific mention of refugee pupils (the BEA Sec.29 acts through the general prohibition of bullying and violence. The BEA Sec.2 guarantees promoting equality in society as among the key aims of education).

Recognition via differential treatment is, nevertheless, still identifiable through the rules of using different languages in education, which entrench the children's mother tongue in compulsory education. BEA Sec.10 provides

that the language in compulsory education is Finnish or Swedish (the official state languages), consonant with the languages of Sámi, Romani (the recognized minority languages), and the sign languages. Provided it does not impair the achievement of educational objectives, “other languages may be used as the language of instruction” (ibid). In a separate teaching group (or school), teaching can be provided "primarily or totally" in a language other than official languages (ibid). Taking into account that the UN Refugee Convention articulates the nexus between religious education and refugee education (Art.4 guarantees to refugees “treatment at least as favourable as that accorded to their nationals concerning… freedom as regards the religious education of their children”), recognition can also be found by analysing how the issue of religious education is regulated by the BEA. Following BEA Sec.13, if three or more pupils belonging to other religious communities do not participate in religious education, which is a part of the curriculum, they should be provided religious education "under their own religion" upon parental request.

In the case of Norway, EA Sec.1 highlights that education and training must be based on the fundamental values of the Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, such as respect for human dignity and nature, intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality, and solidarity as well as values that also appear in different religions and are rooted in human rights. References to recognition are contained in several other sections regulating the issue of the language of instruction in education. As a rule, the language of instruction is Norwegian (Sec.2-5) and sign language (Sec.2-6). Differential treatment for recognition of refugee pupils is identifiable in the EA rule of granting to pupils whose mother tongue is not Norwegian the right to “adapted” instruction in the Norwegian language and, if necessary, to mother-tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both (Sec.2-8). Moreover, recognition is also expressed through regulating religious education. EA Sec.2-3a stipulates the schools’ obligation to respect the religious and philosophical beliefs of pupils and parents and ensure their right to equal education, meaning that pupils must be exempted from participating in those parts of teaching that their parents “find objectionable or offensive”. The EA Sec.2-3 emphasizes that “Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of life and Ethics is an ordinary school subject that must normally be attended by all pupils”. Such teaching aims at promoting “understanding, respect and the ability to carry out a dialogue between people with differing views concerning beliefs and philosophies of life’ and ‘must present different world religions and philosophies of life in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner” (ibid).

The EA Sec.9 A-4 counteracts bullying and violence through a policy of general prohibition, declaring that “the school must have zero tolerance for violations, such as bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment” (ibid).

All pupils' voices must be heard and "the best interest of the pupils must be a fundamental concern in the school's work" (ibid).

2.3 Transformation

Our working definition of transformation, derived from Fredman's concept, is as follows: action aimed at preventing refugee pupils from suffering detrimental consequences in schooling that relate to their background, which should lead to a structural change in expanding diversity in compulsory education.

In Finland, all pupils with immigrant backgrounds, including refugee pupils, can benefit from BEA Sec.16, stipulating that "a pupil who is temporarily behind in his or her studies or otherwise needs short-term support in learning, is entitled to supportive education". When it comes to action and programs benefiting refugee pupils, BEA Sec.5 provides resources to assist municipalities in organizing preparation for compulsory education, supplementary education, – and to the extent decided by the municipality, flexible basic education in grades 7–9. BEA Sec.9 stipulates that special preparation for compulsory education corresponds to one year of study. Moreover, BEA Sec.7 guarantees the right for registered public associations to organize their educational institutions.

In Norway, EA Sec.1-4 stipulates a general obligation of the school to ensure that pupils from grades 1–4 who are "at risk of lagging in reading, writing, or mathematics' arrange suitable intensive instruction so that they achieve the expected progress". EA Sec.1-1 guarantees that education "must provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions". According to EA Sec.8-2, the organization of pupils into classes is meant to meet "their need for social belonging". The EA Sec.13-6 also indicates the significance of arranging cultural activities linked with school courses "organized in association with … local cultural life".

As for specific action for transformation, the EA stipulates several rules regarding special assistance for those who do not speak the Norwegian language in compulsory education. Such a mode of support as adapted language education is possible until the pupils "are sufficiently proficient in Norwegian to follow the normal instruction of the school" (EA Sec.2-8). The opportunity to benefit from mother-tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or other instruction adapted to pupils' abilities' is also guaranteed if the mother tongue instruction and bilingual subject teaching cannot be provided by suitable teaching staff (ibid).

For pupils who have recently arrived in Norway, "special educational facilities in separate groups, classes or schools can be organized, which lasts

for up to two years" (ibid). At the same time, EA Sec.9-7 contains a clear prohibition on wearing face-covering clothing for pupils during in-school and extra-curriculum activities.

2.4 Participation

The working definition of participation, according to Fredman, implies actively addressing the issue of refugee pupils' involvement in school life and decision-making within the school environment.

In Finland, the BEA Sec.2 generally aims at promoting everyone's right or opportunity for 'participating in education and otherwise developing themselves during their lives. BEA Sec.47a adds that schools can foster pupils' associations aimed at promoting "joint action, influence and participation of the pupils in matters relating to pupils". In the absence of such associations, there should be 'other action' in the school to provide an opportunity for pupils to express their opinions on matters related to "the operation of their school … unit which concern the pupils collectively" (ibid). Activities for enhancing the participation of refugee pupils are not mentioned.

In Norway, pupils' engagement in school decision-making is also explained in the most general terms. EA Sec.9 A-8 provides that pupils "must be involved in the planning and performance of the work for a good psychosocial school environment». A separate EA Chapter 11 regulates participatory opportunities for educational users, i.e., participation via school bodies, voting in general school meetings, and being present during the sessions of county boards.

3 Discussion and conclusion

Our analysis of the provisions of two Education Acts according to Fredman's (2016) four main dimensions of substantive equality, reveals that frequently there are general proclamations of equality or prohibitions of certain actions rather than concrete programs for refugee pupils (within the wider framework of pupils with an immigrant background), as summarized below.

Table 1. Substantive equality in educational acts of Finland and Norway

Common for both states	Specialty in Finland	Specialty in Norway
	Redistribution	
• Special schools, classes, or groups for pupils with an immigrant background	• BEA Sec.20– participation in pilot programs: schools are chosen 'to be represented according to regional and linguistic standards	–
	Recognition	
• General prohibition of bullying, violence, discrimination, and harassment • Possibility of exemption from certain parts of religious education	• BEA Sec.13: three or more pupils from different religious communities are provided with religious education based on their religion	• General prohibition of bullying, violence, discrimination, and harassment • Possibility of exemption from certain parts of religious education
	Transformation	
• General rule: of supporting the education of those who need support general rule: respect for human dignity, nature, and all cultures in education • Three modes of support: Flexible national language training, subject teaching in the mother tongue, mother tongue studies • Special preparatory teaching for newly arrived pupils	• BEA Sec. 7 registered public associations can organize their educational institutions	• EA Sec.9-7 prohibits students from wearing clothes covering their faces
	Participation	
• General obligation to introduce advisory bodies at school where pupils can express their opinions on issues related to schooling	–	–

Our findings defined the commonly shared features of each of Fredman's dimensions of substantive equality, as applied to the category of refugees within a broader category of pupils with an immigrant background in compulsory education in Finnish and Norwegian contexts. These features comprise indirect references to redistributing public goods to redress disadvantages associated with refugee status (such as not knowing the language or unfamiliarity with the customs and habits upon arrival to the host state) by guaranteeing education in separate classes and/or buildings; approaching recognition via general proclamations of equality and general prohibitions of

stigma, stereotypes, bullying as well as special measures; guaranteeing the use of the mother tongue, and abstaining from certain parts of the curricula entailing religion; promoting transformation by general proclamations of the goals of achieving equality and promoting cultural diversity in education and introducing special measures of supporting newly-arrived children in education, including education in special groups and classes.

The key issue regarding the benefit of special measures in the name of substantive equality relates to achieving transformation by arranging education for refugees in special classes, groups, or schools relevant to both states under consideration. In Finland, such an approach is often accompanied by critique, related not only to segregation in education (especially vis-à-vis the fact that refugee children often have to live in refugee centers which increases isolation). An argument entailing the future economic integration of refugees is often invoked in conjunction with social integration (Masoud, Holm, Brunila 2021). Fratzke et al (2021, pp. 30), for example, assert that local and national government actors believe that a year of preparation for compulsory education in a special group or class unnecessarily delays refugees' entry into the labor market and creates a perception of the local level that refugees are struggling to integrate. On the other hand, these measures could counterbalance tendencies accounted for in Finland and Norway for "common sense cultural assumptions concerning 'proper' social relations", which emphasize the values of the majority (Olwig 2012, pp. 3).

Alarming is the shared approach to participation since both educational acts recognize the value of participation in compulsory education in the most general terms. This is probably due to the history of democratic discourse in Finnish and Norwegian education. Compulsory schooling is an arena in which "citizenship was constructed during the early years of the Nordic welfare states" (Kortekangas 2017, pp. 81). Citizenship has an 'emancipatory' meaning (Turner 1993), allowing citizens to participate in decision-making. Education and citizenship link (language) minorities, education, and participation (ibid). Hence, compulsory education aims, inter alia, to train pupils to participate in decision-making, first at school, and after reaching maturity in elections. This is undeniably an advantage for citizens, consonant with our discussion. Yet a lack of measures to assist refugee children who recently arrived and do not have a clear picture of how to behave and express their opinions and participate in school life, again evokes the discourse on the exclusion of 'others'" from society (Benhabib 2004; Migliarini 2018). While providing for 'top-down' or pre-planned participatory avenues (CoE 2011, 8), both education acts under review avoid special consideration of representation for disadvantaged children, an issue which is crucial in legal analytics (ibid, pp. 9).

Our analysis also revealed several contrasts in the above-mentioned acts to the substantive equality of refugee pupils. In terms of redistribution, BEA

Sec.20 in Finland refers to preferential treatment of schools with linguistic diversity in education when deciding on schools participating in special pilot programs. Unfortunately, the preparatory materials for adopting this law do not elaborate on why this specific preference was granted (Governmental proposal regarding the BEA 1997).

A significant difference in recognition is illustrated by Norway opting for prohibiting face-covering clothes at school. This rule was introduced in 2018, aiming at promoting greater openness and communication (Wijnen 2017) and women empowerment (Christopoulou 2018). Following Fredman's argumentation, requiring some groups to adhere to the majority norm could be less effective in achieving structural change for mitigating the detrimental treatment of some children who wear clothes covering their faces (Fredman 2016, pp. 727). Understandably, this idea faced objections from, inter alia, the university community (ibid). In Finland, an official proposal to prohibit wearing scarves (which do not cover the face) in pre-schools was made in 2018. (Toimenpidealoite TPA 18 2018). This proposal, however, was never officially considered in Parliament (ibid).

Another difference is that in Finland, registered public associations can obtain a license to establish their primary schools, which supports associations promoting various languages. The precondition for granting a permanent license is a proven "special educational or cultural need", which exists in a certain region (BEA Sec.7). A case requiring a significant social demand for special language education can result from a significant number of minority language speakers living in a concentrated area. To achieve a balance between specific language education and the risk of segregating some groups, the Government has discretionary powers in awarding the license (Ministry of Education and Culture 2021).

At a more abstract level, it is important to acknowledge that Finland and Norway, despite many similarities in promoting diversity, differ in terms of their historical and cultural backgrounds and governance (Hanssen 2019). One common strategy in respect of diversity is implementing the idea of substantive equality (Fredman 2016), which is strongly connected to the idea of social inclusion. Inclusion, in turn, is linked to democracy, thus, offering everyone the right and opportunity of being heard, as well as to participate and play a role in society (Hausstätter and Vik 2021).

One strength of the Finnish educational culture is that it is well-functioning and guarantees learning and participation in mainstream settings (Ström and Sundqvist 2021). Nevertheless, there is no direct connection between a country's policy documents and the actual possibilities for refugee children to participate, leading to two contradictory messages in the policy documents (ibid). On one hand, inclusion seems to be the pro forma ideal, and yet, on the other hand, local education authorities and schools still have

the power to determine the best option for all pupils, including refugee pupils.

Norway strives to focus on equality in terms of inclusion and the right to participation, and the Norwegian policy documents have been amended to ensure the right to equality largely in the form of direct participation (as envisaged by Fredman 2016). Such a change can provide wider individual choices. On the other hand, lacking common agreement on how equality should be implemented can result in a variety of practices that are seen as threatening, rather than as supporting refugee pupils (Dørum and Hanssen 2020; Svendsen 2021).

To conclude, despite both the Finnish and Norwegian education policies being powerful policy tools for reaching substantive equality, pitfalls still exist. To address these pitfalls, several suggestions can be proposed: a. to continue efforts to enhance the substantive equality of refugee pupils in education, b. to include in education acts provisions that the participation of refugee children in school life and school-related decision-making is especially welcome, and c. to see the legal regulation of substantive equality of refugee children in compulsory education as a living process, for developing new approaches and consolidating successful practices, while ensuring that the laws are amended to account for the said approaches and practices.

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Inclusive educational transitions for refugees with disabilities: Intersectionality and the right to inclusive Education

Marketa Bacakova

1 Introduction

The right to education belongs to the fundamental human rights. Its realisation builds the cornerstone for the exercise of other human rights, such as the right to vote, the right to free speech, or the right to work. Nonetheless, more than 260 million children and young people worldwide still lack access to education and 750 million adults remain illiterate (UNESCO 2018, 122). Despite global investments and initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the inequalities prevail not only in the area of access to education. Diverse factors contribute to the failed goal of education for all, such as gender discrimination, armed conflicts, displacement, poverty, or prejudice against persons with disabilities. To make matters even more complex and adverse for the most vulnerable groups, the above-mentioned factors often interact creating multiple levels of discrimination and inequality not only in education. Thus, children with disabilities living in poverty face additional barriers when accessing education (Kanter 2019, 20), as well as refugees with disabilities or girls with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities forcibly displaced form a particularly vulnerable group facing intersectional discriminatory practices. Exiled from their country of origin, this group of persons with disabilities needs to live without the protection stemming from citizenship or permanent residency. They may have experienced persecution in the country of origin and/or trauma during the flight. Yet persons with disabilities remain largely forgotten in situations of acute crisis of human displacement (Crock et al. 2013, 736), and so is their right to (inclusive) education. Educational transitions thus prove to be a major challenge for this vulnerable group with a wide range of obstacles when accessing education in their new homes.

The present paper aims at shedding light on this partly invisible intersection of vulnerabilities experienced by refugees with disabilities (not only) when accessing their right to education. In order to do so, the article first analyses the established right to inclusive education through the intersection-

al lens and discusses the extent of the protection international human rights law, with a special focus on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), provides in the area of the right to inclusive education to refugees with disabilities. Secondly, in order to investigate the actual implementation of the established legal protection for this particular group, the article analyses all, i.e. 96, concluding observations on countries' reports issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee), which generally summarise the progress States Parties achieved when implementing the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the CRPD in the given review period. Finally, the paper discusses the findings in relation to the results of several field studies mapping the situation of refugees with disabilities worldwide with the aim of investigating the extent to which the CRPD Committee takes advantage of the intersectionality theory.

2 The right to inclusive education and intersectionality

The right to inclusive education belongs to the category of social, economic and cultural rights (Ssenyonjo 2009, 357) and is stipulated in Article 24 of the CRPD for the very first time in the history of international human rights law. No other human rights treaty protected the right to inclusive education prior to the CRPD. The right to education has naturally been protected since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and appears in the core international human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 13), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Art. 10) or the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 28-29), none of them, however, stipulates specifically the right to inclusive education.

The right to education logically builds a very important framework for the right to inclusive education. In this respect and for the purposes of the presented article, the understanding of the right to education as stipulated by the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ICSECR) is of utmost importance. In the General Comment No. 13 (E/C.12/1999/10, par. 6), the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (CESCR) presented a by-now widely accepted set of features, which education in all forms and at all levels should exhibit. These are:

- *Availability*, meaning sufficient quantity of educational institutions and programmes in a particular State Party;
- *Accessibility,* in the form of non-discrimination and physical and economic accessibility;
- *Acceptability*, meaning appropriate forms and substance of education;
- *Adaptability,* meaning flexibility of the education systems reflecting the changing needs of the societies and diverse communities.

This set of indicators is of equal importance to the concept of inclusive education and the subsequent establishment of inclusive education systems and their evaluation. The features make it very clear that the mere possibility to attend a school is not sufficient for the fulfilment of the right to education. The factor of quality plays an equally important role, which had not, however, been accented enough in the past decades, when the attention focused primarily on the accessibility of education and on increasing the total numbers of children attending schools (UNESCO 2004, 28). Even though the principle of quality of education can be traced already in the wording of Article 29(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which stipulates that education needs to aim at helping children reach their fullest potential in terms of not only cognitive abilities, but also creative, social and emotional ones, it may be still observed that although the numbers of children having access to education increase, their educational experiences are not always useful.

This is particularly the case when educational experiences of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons, such as children with disabilities or refugees, are taken into consideration and where the right to inclusive education gains the utmost relevance because it sets out the obligation of establishing *inclusive* systems of education. In order to stress this importance and also clarify some ambiguities surrounding the term ‘inclusive education’, which as such is not defined by the CRPD, the CRPD Committee issued a General Comment No. 4 (CRPD/C/GC/4) on the right to inclusive education in 2016. After two years of discussions and contributions from a wide range of audiences, the CRPD Committee presented the following definition of inclusive education (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 11):

> *Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and the environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.*

2.1 The right to inclusive education

The CRPD itself offers a number of features, which inclusive systems of education must fulfil. These include the principles of non-exclusion, accessibility, available support, trained staff, as well as the overarching principles of reasonable accommodation and progressive realisation. Article 24(2)(a) of the CRPD enshrines the principle of non-exclusion on the grounds of disability, furthermore stipulating the conditions that this obligation must take place in a system of free and compulsory primary education as well as secondary education, which echoes the provisions of the ICESCR (Art. 13(2)) and CRC (Art. 28(1)). Consequently, enrolment into regular schools must be made available for all persons with disabilities. Contrary practices, i.e. refusal of enrolment, amount to a form of discrimination equally prohibited by the foundational Article 5(2) of the CRPD.

The second obligation on the States Parties' side is the principle of accessibility. Article 24(2)(b) of the CRPD states that inclusive education must be made accessible in communities, where persons with disabilities live. This obligation was further elaborated by the CRPD Committee in General Comment No. 4 (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 27), which recommends that children with disabilities should not be obliged to attend boarding schools and that primary and secondary schools should be accessible by safe and secure means of transport or alternatively, through digital technologies. Nevertheless, this alternative should not remain the only means of accessing education for children with disabilities.

The third obligation, enshrined in Article 24(2)(d) of the CRPD, involves the provision of support within the general education system. The relevance of the word 'general' is very high, since it implies that support provision in the form of establishing segregated systems of education for children and adults with disabilities is not in line with the phrasing. The extent of the support provision ranges from available material equipment to trained school staff, personal assistance, counselling and other professionals as again elaborated in the relevant General Comment No. 4 (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 32). Moreover, the costs of the necessary support provision need to be covered by State Parties, which is given by the requirement of 'free' education. Contrary practices would again mean the breach of the anti-discrimination clause in Article 5(2). Notwithstanding, the provision of support is subject to progressive realisation, therefore, States Parties are not obliged to provide all necessary support at once, given the condition that all available resources are indeed being used to implement the right to inclusive education as stipulated by the CRPD.

Furthermore, this obligation includes the purpose of the support provision, which is the 'effective' education. This mirrors the necessary standards

of the concept of quality of education, which is also embedded in the elements of 'acceptability' and 'adaptability' of the right to education (E/C.12/1999/10, par. 6). As a consequence, it is clear that mere physical presence of children with disabilities in schools of the general system of education without any effective support measures does not comply with the CRPD provisions underlying the right to inclusive education. Further characteristics of the support provision are given by the attribute 'individualised' set out in Article 24(2)(e). The CRPD Committee emphasises in this respect the importance of individualised education plans with the direct involvement of children with disabilities and in cooperation with the child's family and relevant third parties. The ultimate goal of the individualised support shall, however, always be the full inclusion (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 33-34).

The fourth obligation involves the employment of qualified staff, including in the areas of sign language and Braille stipulated in Article 24(4) of the CRPD. Significantly, the CRPD Committee stresses that 'all' teachers need to be trained in inclusive education based on the human rights model of disability (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 36). In order to do so, States Parties shall offer professionals and staff at all levels of education possibilities of continuous professional development in the area of inclusive education. Furthermore, the provision emphasises in Article 24(4) the role of teachers with disabilities. As with all the other rights protected by the CRPD, the active involvement of persons with disabilities is essential for the effective implementation of the right to inclusive education. The CRPD Committee stresses this fact by maintaining that the presence of teachers with disabilities in schools at all levels of the system of education will "serve to promote equal rights for persons with disabilities to enter the teaching profession, bring unique expertise and skills into learning environments, contribute to breaking down barriers and serve as important role models" (CRPD/C/GC/4, par. 37).

The underlying principle present in all of the above-mentioned features of inclusive systems of education is the notion of reasonable accommodation, which can be understood as the key to reaching the goal of equal rights for persons with disabilities (Mégret and Msipa 2014, 252; Gooding and Quinlivan 2015, 14). Article 2 of the CRPD defines reasonable accommodation as "necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms." Nevertheless, Article 4(2) sets out a further general principle, which is progressive realisation. This provision obliges States Parties to take measures in order to implement the obligations arising from the CRPD to the maximum of available resources. The necessity of this provision is rooted in the conviction that the full realisation of the economic, social and cultural rights is often not possible straightaway and longer periods are therefore needed before the full realisa-

tion is reached (E/1991/23, par. 9). Nevertheless, the provision does not mean that no effort on the side of States Parties is legitimate and that the realisation of the rights may be postponed *ad libitum* (Beco 2019, 192). On the contrary, States Parties are expected to take necessary action as fast and effectively as possible (E/1991/23, par. 9). This means, in the context of Article 24 of the CRPD, that the objective remains the full realisation of the right to inclusive education, which needs to take place within a reasonable time period.

2.2 The right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities

The above established right to inclusive education will now be investigated using the intersectional lens. The aim is to analyse the extent of the legal protection offered to a specific group finding themselves at the intersections of various vulnerabilities, namely refugees with disabilities. The concept of intersectional discrimination, a term coined by Crenshaw (1989, 150), builds on the idea that when various protected grounds, such as gender, ethnicity or disability, meet simultaneously, this interplay creates specific situations of disadvantage and oppression. These are not mere accumulation of discriminatory practices based on the separate grounds, but they are in fact greater than the addition of the individual parts (Beco 2020b, 593).

Refugees with disabilities find themselves in situations of the above-mentioned intersectional discrimination. They face discriminatory practices targeted generally against people with disabilities and refugees, but they also experience specific oppression stemming from the interplay of these two characteristics. They may be thus left behind during flight or they may not survive the journey, they often lack access to mainstream assistance programmes and are in danger of being exposed to further protection risks, such as sexual and physical violence and harassment (Reilly 2010, 18). For refugees with disabilities, their journeys often take much longer putting them at greater risk of attack and insecurity along the journey (Kett and Trani 2010, 12). When accessing education, refugees with disabilities face particular challenges as well. However, before these obstacles to the implementation of the right to inclusive education stemming from the intersection of vulnerabilities will be further discussed, the question of the legal protection of refugees with disabilities in connection to the right to inclusive education needs to be resolved.

The legal protection of refugees with disabilities lies at the intersection of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Geneva Convention) and the CRPD. The 1951 Geneva Convention does not mention refugees with disabilities specifically, the CRPD, on the other hand, offers more guidance

and clarity. Nevertheless, the 1951 Geneva Convention is interpreted to require States to provide persons with disabilities with assistance (Crock et al. 2017, 40) ensuring also in Articles 22(1) and 22(2) the access to primary education on equal terms with nationals and treatment as favourable as possible, but in any case not less favourable than accorded to non-nationals, when accessing other levels of the education system. The CRPD goes, however, one step further with the stipulation of the right to *inclusive* education.

Equally, the CRPD is the first human rights convention referring to both international humanitarian law and international human rights law and thus explicitly covering situations of emergency and displacement of persons with disabilities (Crock et al. 2017, 33). Article 11 of the CRPD sets out the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, including "situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters." The CRPD thus explicitly recognises that refugees with disabilities are especially vulnerable and provides a clear answer to the question, of whether the human rights enshrined in the CRPD apply also to refugees with disabilities: Yes, the CRPD, including the right to inclusive education, applies to all persons regardless of their legal status and nationality, thus including also all refugees with disabilities and persons in refugee-like situations and emergencies (Crock et al. 2013, 736).

3 Implementation of the right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities

Taking the positive and satisfactory level of the legal protection offered to refugees with disabilities in relation to the right to inclusive education into consideration, it is of utmost importance to also investigate the subsequent realisation of the established right. Given the rather unsatisfactory situation in the general progress of implementing the right to inclusive education worldwide and the scarce resources and infrastructure in many countries, it is not surprising that also refugees with disabilities face challenges when accessing education. In order to gain a more detailed view of the current situation of the implementation of the right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities, content analysis of all concluding observations on countries' reports issued by the CRPD Committee in relation to the right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities was undertaken. Ninety-six concluding observations summarising the progress and implementation of the CRPD in 92 different countries worldwide were analysed, covering the period between 2011, when the first two concluding observations on the reports of Spain and Tunisia were issued, and 2021.

The anticipated discrepancy between the relatively high legal protection of refugees with disabilities and the unsatisfactory implementation of the right to inclusive education has been confirmed by the concluding observation. However, this disparity does not manifest itself in detailed monitoring of the failed implementation of the right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities, but sadly in the general invisibility of the population of refugees with disabilities in the concluding observations. This, however, is apparent not only in the work of the CRPD Committee, but also in the general lack of reliable statistical data. The incidence of disabilities amongst refugees remains unknown (Crock et al. 2017, 23), with some reports suggesting that it may be significantly higher than in the general population. Among Syrian refugees the numbers reported were twice as high with a further 30 per cent categorised as having specific needs (HelpAge International and Handicap International 2014, 14).

The refugee population with disabilities is thus only occasionally mentioned in the concluding observation, but scarcely in connection with the right to inclusive education. Therefore, concerns may be found regarding the conditions for persons with disabilities in Australian detention centres (CRPD/C/AUS/CO/2-3, par. 13(e)), the lack of support for refugees with disabilities in the UK in exercising their legal capacity (CRPD/C/GBR/CO/1, par. 30(c)), missing health insurance and health care for refugees with disabilities in Iran (CRPD/C/IRN/CO/1, par. 49(d)) and Germany (CRPD/C/DEU/CO/1, par. 47), inaccessible refugee status determination procedures for refugees with disabilities in Cyprus (CRPD/C/CYP/CO/1, par. 15), or directly concerning the implementation of Article 11 of the CRPD mentioning the lack of information or counselling possibilities for refugees with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies (e.g. CRPD/C/DZA/CO/1, par. 22; CRPD/C/FRA/CO/1, par. 23; CRPD/C/LUX/CO/1, par. 20; CRPD/C/IRN/CO/1, par. 24(1)). Interestingly, refugees with disabilities remain completely unnoticed in concluding observations prior to 2015, but have been increasingly mentioned in the later documents since then. Issues connected directly to the right to inclusive education are, on the other hand, brought up in two out of the 96 concluding observations only. The CRPD Committee fails to point out the difficulties of refugees with disabilities when accessing (inclusive) education even in countries, which are host to a significant number of refugees, such as Turkey, Jordan, or Germany.

The CRPD Committee mentions explicitly only the lack of access to inclusive education for refugee students with disabilities in Greece (CRPD/C/GRC/CO/1, par. 34(c)) and in France (CRPD/C/FRA/CO/1, par. 50(a)). Nevertheless, research and evidence from the field show that obstacles faced by the group of refugees with disabilities when accessing education are manifold. The reality of displacement is that refugee children generally lack access to even basic education (Smith-Khan and Crock 2018, 2), with almost 50

per cent of the six million school-age children under UNHCR's mandate not having the possibility to attend school (UNHCR 2016, 6). Refugee children are worldwide five times more likely to be out of school (UNESCO 2017, 12) despite SDG4 stating that by 2030 everybody should have access to inclusive and equitable education including refugees (United Nations 2015). However, individual governments interpret their responsibilities towards these international declarations very differently (Taylor and Sidhu 2012, 45; Dryden-Peterson 2016, 480), often in an ad-hoc manner without clear educational policies (McIntyre et al. 2020, 405). For refugees with disabilities, the situation is even more adverse.

Physical inaccessibility of school facilities proves to be the major barrier (Refugee Law Project 2014, 19), followed by missing and inadequate teacher training in inclusive education (Handicap International 2015, 15) and the lack of even the most basic assistive devices ensuring reasonable accommodation as required by the CRPD (Smith-Khan and Crock 2018, 10). A research study on the needs of Syrian refugee children with intellectual disabilities found that only one-quarter of the children received additional assistance within the system of education (Oner et al. 2020, 653). Stereotyping and stigmatising constitute further barriers. Some refugee students with disabilities might experience direct forms such as bullying and ostracism (Smith-Khan 2013, 66) or indirect forms when their families decide to hide the fact of having a child with a disability in order to protect them or to protect themselves from the stereotyping practices stemming from having a child with a disability. In such situations, the educational needs of refugees with disabilities remain undiscovered or under-reported (UNESCO 2018, 176). In some cases, refugee families do not view the education of their children with disabilities as a priority (HelpAge International and Handicap International 2014, 33).

Moreover, research indicates that the level of school attendance of refugees with disabilities depends also on the type of disability, with young Afghan refugees in Pakistan with visual impairment being the most likely to attend school with more than 50 per cent attendance rates, while refugee children with learning disabilities and challenges in the area of self-care are the least likely, with approx. 20 and 7 per cent respectively (Smith-Khan et al. 2013, 26).

Returning now to the four features of the right to education set out by the CESCR, i.e. availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability, it may be concluded that refugees with disabilities face challenges at all levels. Availability of education in situations of emergency and forced displacement remains generally critical with refugee children being detained in many countries with limited or no access to education (UNESCO 2018, 34) despite the increased funding of education in emergencies (UNESCO 2020, 328). The condition of accessibility of education for refugees with disabilities is neither fulfilled in many cases due to prevailing physical barriers, unsafe environ-

ment (UNESCO 2020, 290) and discriminatory practices, such as bullying, harassment or exclusion (Handicap International 2015, 27; Çelik and İçduygu 2018, 260). Acceptable education of refugees with disabilities would mean that they have the possibility to learn (in) their native language (Tomaševski 2001, 30) while also giving them the possibility of full inclusion in the host country. Segregation policies and practices are, however, commonplace in many countries (UNESCO 2020, 115) with missing universal, flexible and relevant curricula for all children (UNESCO 2020, 21). The last condition of adaptability, i.e. the requirement upon schools to adapt to the needs of learners, including children with disabilities (Tomaševski 2001, 31), in line with the obligation of reasonable accommodation stipulated by the CRPD, remains equally unsatisfied. The lack of assistive tools (Smith-Khan and Crock 2018, 10), trained staff and inclusive methodologies including alternative means of communication (HelpAge International and Handicap International 2014, 33) illustrate the failure.

4 Conclusion

The present article examined the right to inclusive education through the intersectional lens focusing on the population of refugees with disabilities. Even though they enjoy the full protection of the CRPD, including the right to inclusive education, refugee pupils and students with disabilities remain largely invisible not only in practice, but sadly also in the work of the CRPD Committee. Given the manifold difficulties faced by this group of persons when accessing inclusive education, the present article concludes that the right to inclusive education for refugees with disabilities needs to be carefully reconsidered on various levels, in order to enhance the progress in its implementation for this specific group.

The article is an invitation to embrace the concept of intersectionality more frequently not only by practitioners, but also on the level of international human rights law, the respective UN treaty bodies and academic research. Positive developments may already be observed in the increasing reference to intersectionality in the concluding observations issued by the CRPD in the past five years. However, elevated adoption of this approach is needed since it has the potential to bring invisible cases of human rights violations of the most vulnerable groups to light and to enable tackling oppression of persons belonging simultaneously to multiple vulnerable groups (Beco 2020a, 58). By encouraging States Parties to apply the intersectional lens in the reporting process, by acknowledging that specific forms of oppression and exclusion take place when multiple forms of vulnerability intersect and by bridging the

individual human rights treaties, a truly inclusive approach to the protection of human rights might be established.

Considering the specific example of the right to inclusive education, this perspective could contribute to addressing not only the individual experiences of disrespect, exclusion and the lack of support in education, but also highlight the broader system failures. Very little is known about the educational trajectories of refugees with disabilities in urban settings and in Europe and North America in general, creating thus a research gap, which needs to be filled by applying the intersectional approach. Furthermore, the intersectional point of view is likely to promote the concept of inclusive education by emphasizing the importance of education for *all* where no groups and individuals are left behind, and the forgotten ones are given a voice.

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Emergent educational policies towards mainstreaming migrants in public education: The case of Turkey

Hanife Akar and Anıl Kandemir

1 Introduction

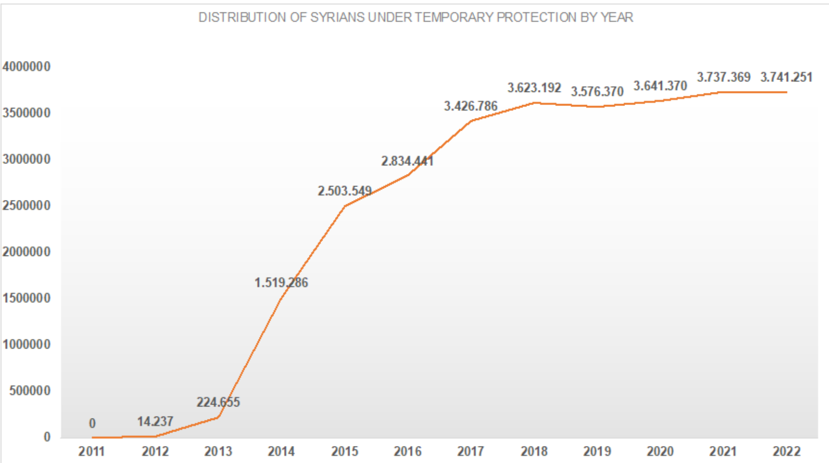
Massive movements towards the southeast of the Turkish Republic due to seeking safety in neighboring countries starting almost more than a decade ago have brought about massive challenges to nations at social and economic levels. After the first humanitarian aid had been accomplished, the education of children at schooling age became the utmost important issue to be tackled with. Fluctuations in student population, change in the language of instruction, and the preparedness levels to the curriculum offered in the host country triple the available challenges for policy-makers as well as practitioners. They should consider emergent educational policies to enable equal educational opportunities for migrant children as do their counterparts receive at the national level as a human right. Therefore, the decision-making and the enactment process to develop such educational policies is of deep concern. Given the ongoing complexities on a global scale, good practices or lessons learned from nations that could take bold measures and change their educational policies accordingly to meet the educational needs of displaced or forced immigrants matter.

As a result of catastrophic natural or human-made disasters such as conflicts, and economic and social crises in the eastern and south-eastern countries, the Republic of Turkey has become perhaps the most vulnerable country as she has been subjected to massive figures of immigrant movements as of 2011 onwards. The term "refugee" is not used explicitly in the Turkish political context due to the legislation that only identifies individuals from the Western European countries as a refugee, and therefore the rest are recognized as individuals under "international protection" such as the Syrian, Afghani, Palestinian, Somalian, and Yemen's and the refugee Syrians granted "Temporary Protection". The policy behind this is rooted in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with a geographical limitation. The Regulation limits the rights to receive refugee status to asylum seekers from Europe. Those outside Europe would be granted only a temporary stay

until they are resettled to a third country (Kirişci, 2014). In 2013, Law 6458 relating to Foreigners and International Protection (Foreigners and International Protection Law 2013) includes articles that enable students and families from non-European countries to receive settlement opportunities from 5 up to 10 years based on specific regulations. We, therefore, use the terms displaced or forced migrants to refer to refugees.

Not surprisingly, Turkey was identified as the highest refugee receiving country globally in the last decade (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019). As of 2020, it was identified as the largest host country for the fifth consecutive year, with over 3.6 million immigrants that mainly consisted of Syrian nationality (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021). Figures currently reveal that 27.24 percent (*N*=1.365.884 out of 5.013.631) of foreigners, including immigrants with international protection holders and Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, are of schooling age (Ministry of National Education, 2021). Figure 1 depicts the magnitude of the numbers of Syrian forced immigrants in the case of Turkey.

Figure 1. Distribution of Syrian nationals under temporary protection by year



Source: Directorate of Migration Management (DGMM), As of 3 Feb. 2022. Data from https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27#

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the case of the Republic of Turkey as a transition as well as a high receiving country for replaced or forced migrants as of 2011 that took place as a result of the so-called Syrian crisis, and describe the ad hoc educational policy changes that progress towards mainstreaming forced immigrants' education into public education. Turkey, which may well be identified from an economic perspective as a developing nation

has released and implemented stringent work packages based on those ad hoc policies that go beyond mainstreaming immigrant children at schooling age into the formal education, and aims at developing social adaptation within the community they reside since there was no or little observation of return to the home countries they came from. This chapter attempts to provide a descriptive overview of the educational policy changes relying on a synthesis of available literature from peer-reviewed journals in databases such as the Web of Science, Scopus, and the Turkish Index. We also used grey literature from national and international organizations' research reports to provide a neutral perspective of our synthesis. More specifically, we attempted to shed light on the magnitude of changes, practices and the challenges towards offering equal educational services for all children at schooling age so that the lessons learned from the practices and experiences of the case of Turkey as a high receiving country can be transferable to other high receiving countries in times of complexities and massive human movements.

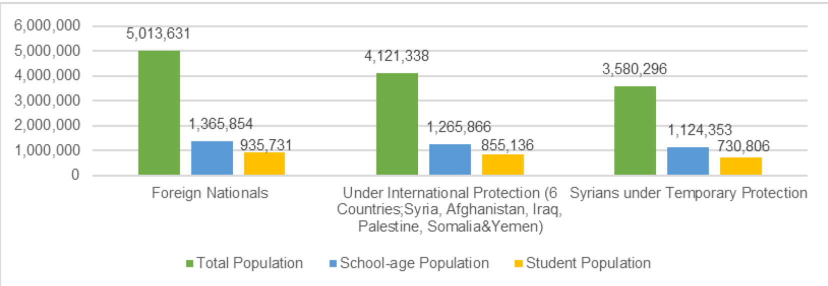
2 The educational context in Turkey

Transitional processes in the context of refugee education, as the title of the book depicts, inquires for the elaboration of the case of the Republic of Turkey as a receiving country to understand the processes in the context of education of displaced or forced migrants and consider transformative lessons from practice and research for nations who may become vulnerable as well due to diverse catastrophic events simultaneously or in the future. To consider transferable policies that aim to embrace the children to educate them towards a healthy and safe future as a basic need, a detailed description of the case is considered compulsory.

The education system in Turkey is operated by a central authority, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which is responsible for mandating all formal and non-formal educational activities. The Fundamental Law on National Education describes its objective as "education to become constructive, creative, and efficient individuals, well-prepared for life with essential interests, aptitudes, and capabilities and is free of charge for all compulsory and tertiary education." Education is stated that it shall be operated under principles that highlight modernity, scientific and secular education, and shall provide equal opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, background, or other. The Educational Law also explicitly describes that the official language of the Republic of Turkey is Turkish, and that the medium of instruction in public schools shall be in Turkish, indicating the mono-linguistic perspective of education.

Formal education covers pre-school, primary, middle, secondary, and higher education. Compulsory education lasts 12 years, starts at the age of 69 months, and ends at the age of 18. Despite many policy investments in increasing figures for preschool education, it is not compulsory (MoNE, 2014). While twelve-year compulsory education is free of charge in primary, middle, and secondary schools, preschool is mainly privately run, not allowing for equal access opportunities for all children at pre-school age. Primary education lasts for four years, and schools have a formal curriculum to follow. Middle school education, which is also identified as lower secondary education, lasts for four years, and requires no passing grade in an exam to be enrolled or transit to a public middle school. Secondary education lasts for four years (Basic Law of National Education). There are various types of secondary education models across Turkey, such as high schools of science, high schools of social sciences, public high schools, vocational and technical high schools, high schools of fine arts and sports, and religious high schools identified as imam hatip schools (Eurydice, 2019; MoNE, 2014). Students' pursuit toward academic or vocational career tracks depends on their high-school choices. Students take a high-school entrance exam to be placed in a high school based on their exam scores, overall performance, and preference (MoNE, 2016).

Figure 2. Distribution of total population, school-age population, and student population



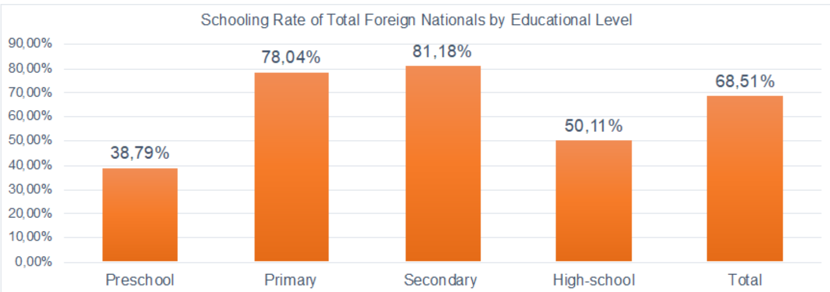
Source: Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Lifelong Learning Department of Education in Immigration and Emergency Situations (January 2022). https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_01/26165737_goc2022sunu.pdf

Demographic-wise Turkey is a nation holding a large generation of children at schooling age. Based on the annual statistics provided by the Ministry of National Education (2022), the figures for non-local migrants from 2011 onwards reached some 12,715,265. The foreign population of children of schooling age as of 2022 is depicted in Figure 2. Figures reveal that a little more than one-third of the children, or 3,756,073 children are foreign nationals or under protection. At the same time only two-thirds of them (n=2,521,673) attend formal schooling, and the rest, as many as 1,234,400

schooling-age children out of school are not attending education due to several reasons such as economic reasons. As of January 2022, figures provided by MoNE (2022) also indicate that male migrant or foreign students outnumber (% 50,93) female students (% 49,07).

The schooling of migrants or foreign nationals happens mostly at the primary and lower secondary school levels and dropout trends can be observed for high school educational level (see; Figure 3). Alongside the magnitude of increasing student populations, the diversity in the classroom contexts caused additional challenges for the teachers and the school administrators. Carter and Darling-Hammond (2016) call this diversity "a web of social identities" (p. 593) as each student is a unique individual and brings in their dispositions, their social, cultural, and political realities. In the case of receiving displaced children, the diversity includes nationalities, languages, religions, and dress codes, which may all be represented disproportionally in time and space depending on the location of the school. Teacher training and development to teach for quality education for all has become more challenging than ever, and teachers who were dramatically exposed to such learning environments should be granted a well-deserved appreciation.

Figure 3. Distribution of schooling rate of total foreign nationals by educational level



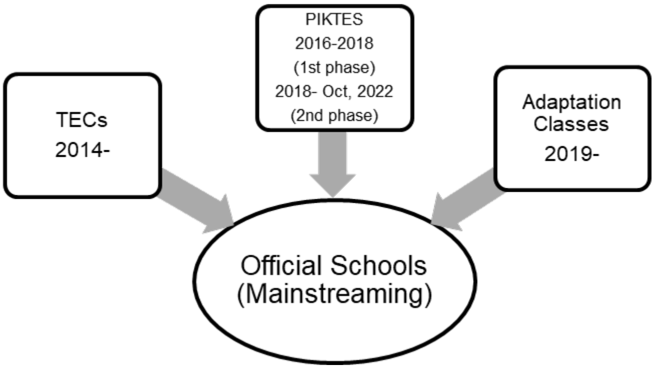
Source: Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Lifelong Learning Department of Education in Immigration and Emergency Situations (January 2022). https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_01/26165737_goc2022sunu.pdf

3 Journey of mainstreaming migrants into public education

The changing political, social, and economic forces such as the case of increasing unexpected culturally and nationally diverse student numbers in a country urge policymakers to resolve the needs and complexities (Heck,

2004) of the schooling of children who are uprooted from their placements. For every child, regardless they are local, migrant, refugee, or displaced, education is emergent and the most essential priority to tackle for their well-being. Thus, the initial concern for policy formation for the education of displaced or forced migrant children at schooling age is related to the humanistic dimension and mostly related to non-formal dimensions. Ultimately, it is expected to gradually progress towards educational transitions from the emergency humanitarian needs-oriented contexts towards the academic-oriented learning contexts. Emergent ad hoc policies, the trajectories, and the experiences gained from the policies put into practice provide transformational lessons from the knowledge learned in the Turkish case are elaborated on from the perspective of five transitory loops, the Temporary Education Centers in temporary settings, the intensive language programs PIKTES I and PIKTES II, Cohesion and adaptation classes, and finally the mainstreaming process via inclusive education (see; Figure 4). The Temporary Education Centers were places identified as places to educate uprooted children.

Figure 4. Models for the transition from language and social cohesion programs to official schools for the uprooted children as a result of forced migration.



The former three models were primarily financed by international funds, especially the European Union, and served mainly to invest in the language development of migrant students in the host country to facilitate their transition into public general or vet schools. Next, the cohesion and adaptation classes model was embedded in public schools and they led toward full attendance in k-12 and higher education. There is evidence that the academic track offered in lower middle schools and the lack of development of employability skills at this level are one of the primary reasons for children with poor backgrounds to drop out early. The UNHCR highlights higher education as a vital level since higher education has a global priority and aligns its goals with the 2030 Global Agenda for Education (UNHCR, 2019); therefore, the

chapter includes the presentation of migrant education in emergent times from all educational levels.

3.1 Temporary education centers

Practices based on the emergent education policies for foreign migration children became effective, and started to be implemented widely and were regulated closely with MoNE since the forced migrants stormed into the nations with their school-age children. To help foreign school-age children living in Turkey to benefit from primary and secondary education, Temporary Education Centers (TEC) were founded after Regulation Article 2014/21 (MoNE, 2014) was released. The idea behind the TEC was to help foreign students who had come to Turkey through a mass influx to be able to continue their education that was interrupted in their home countries and help them to prevent losing years of study when they would return to their home countries or when they wish to move on to any type and degree of education institution officially run by the Ministry of National Education and to continue their education in their country of origin.

The curriculum offered at the TECs had been prepared by the Ministry of National Education with the approval of the Board of Education and was also aligned with the Syrian curricula. The language of instruction at these centers was primarily Arabic at that time. Teachers of Turkish Language and Literature were also working at the TECs; nevertheless, they operated under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey. Along with the schools offering services at the temporary accommodation centers, the education activities carried out by the Syrian and Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at school buildings in the Turkish context were included (Coşkun and Emin, 2016).

In light of all these developments, TECs were established with the Regulation issued in 2014 and were, as planned, closed down before 2020. As made clear with the above statements, it was ensured that the foreign individuals who came via forced migration settled at the temporary accommodation centers with emergent policies developed right after the first dramatic influx of human movement took place, and attempted to primarily offer Turkish initially as the official language of the nation immigrated, followed by Arabic education. The ultimate purpose of the education received at the TECs enabled schooling-aged migrants to enroll in the schools closest to the neighborhoods they settled down upon entering the country. To put it bluntly, TECs functioned as a bridge for foreign or migrant school-aged children, and in case their families were determined to reside longer, they would be able to apply and register for formal schooling based on the integration policies.

3.2 Project for promoting integration of Syrian kids: PIKTES I and II

The Project for Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES)" was established as an emergent education project carried out by the Ministry of National Education to enable the access of children under Temporary Protection to formal education. The emergent model was implemented in 26 PIKTES programs in provinces with highest numbers of receiving provinces, which are Adana, Adıyaman, Ankara, Antalya, Batman, Bursa, Çorum, Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Hatay, İstanbul, İzmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri, Kilis, Kocaeli, Konya, Malatya, Mardin, Mersin, Osmaniye, Sakarya, Samsun, Sanliurfa, Yalova (PIKTES, 2022).

The entire budget of PIKTES was covered by the European Union with a direct grant method within the framework of the "Financial Assistance Program for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT)" agreement. The project that started on 03.10.2016 was operating in 26 provinces of the country at that time and transferred to PIKTES II Project in December 2018, and is supposed to continue until October 2022. Phases I and II in the project are dependent on the funding process and do not include or reflect significant changes in the implementation process.

The primary purpose of the PIKTES project is to promote children's access under temporary protection towards formal education and support, especially for Syrian children's Turkish language development and social cohesion. In this scope, PIKTES also aims to support the efforts of the Ministry of National Education on formal education and social cohesion. The gains of the project are multiple and reveal that the model enabled increased access to formal education by Syrian students in provinces that were supported by PIKTES. Next, the quality of education offered to Syrian students increased. especially, after the first trials in the TECS, the operational quality of educational institutions and staff in PIKTES improved. Consequently, it was observed that the social integration of Syrian students and parents increased as well (PIKTES, 2022).

Although the PIKTES model has been granted with good practices, there were major challenges that especially PIKTES teachers or trainers had to cope with. In the early stages, a lack of instructional resources and curricular material, especially for teaching Turkish as a second language, was the main barrier to running effective Turkish language classes, which also doubled the challenge for teachers who were not equipped with the essential knowledge and skills to teach diverse student population with no Turkish language backgrounds at all (Boylu and Işık, 2019). Building the capacity of teachers simultaneously was mostly left to the teachers in the field, indicating that they needed to sink or swim. On the other hand, another challenge stemmed from

the student population themselves. They were reluctant to invest in Turkish language development at that time thinking they would stay temporarily and would likely return to their home countries when the conflict in their home countries would end. Alternately, they were planning to transit to more prosperous countries in the Western countries. Nevertheless, the displaced families and their children remained to reside in the places they immigrated to in Turkey with no plans to return to their home countries (Ertong-Attar and Küçükşen, 2019) that accelerated the establishment of emergent policies toward mainstreaming the migrant students into formal education and the ad hoc policy need for establishing cohesion classes was inevitable.

3.3 Cohesion classes model

Cohesion classes were established in 2019 after the Temporary Educational Centers closed systematically and in cases where there are no PIKTES programs available in the cities where emergent migrants started to reside. This inclusive program has two main purposes. Initially, it intends to provide an opportunity to help the students adapt to the Turkish education system, the school community, and society overall. Secondly, it aims to provide intensive Turkish education to all foreign or migrant students who do not use Turkish properly to follow classes, and for those who need to improve their Turkish language skills towards investment in further academic tracks. Cohesion classes are offered in schools starting from 3rd grade up to 12th grade, and most of them are offered by contracted or part-time teachers. They are only open under the condition that there are at least 10 students in need to attend these classes and a teacher can be hired. However, each class can be formed with a maximum number of 30 students. Student language needs are identified through a standardized exam. If the number of students at the same grade levels is not sufficient to offer these classes, there are possibilities to enroll the migrant students in combined classes with subsequent grades, such as 3rd and 4th grades in one group, or even enable them to take the classes in a school in the same localities.

The lessons learned were multiple from the cohesion classes. The language barrier reveals to be the main obstacle to all integration-related education models being effective. While Kapat and Şahin (2021), Karabacak (2020), and Başar, Akan, and Çiftçi (2018) mainly refer to the need for instructional instruments concerning language development, Çelik and Bozan (2020) refer to the integration challenge of migrant children into the socio-cultural context of schools. The latter highlight that the cohesion classes have flaws as they may label the children as cognitively ineffective and may draw them towards psycho-social isolation. Similarly, Başar, Akan, and Çiftçi

(2018) consider that the isolation problem may result from a lack of effective communication skills and social adaptation. As a result, cohesion classes needed to be considered beyond language development classes, and educate the migrant as well as the native local students toward developing social adaptation, intercultural, and communication skills.

Despite the attempts, the dropout rates of migrant students outnumbered the rates of the native disadvantaged students. Alongside promoting capacity for resources fit to use in cohesion classes, the Ministry of National Education adopted policy implications from international organizations and provided incentives for migrant students to enroll in VET education to hinder their dropout levels and promote employability skills (Özer, Suna, and Numanoğlu, 2021). Since parents play a vital role in the development of their children, Demir-Başaran (2020) and Şensin and Yılmaz (2021) suggest promoting effective cooperation between parents and schools for all children may bring a change in the cohesion classes implementation. As a result, regardless of public or VET schools, access and attendance of migrants to education can be promoted if the policies can simultaneously produce the instruments and practices necessary to receive quality and meaningful education and also promote the social adaptation of the migrant children.

4 The context of higher education for displaced students

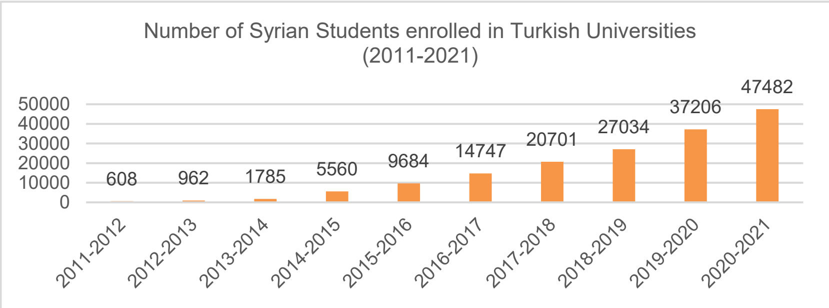
University education is non-compulsory and exists in three cycles in the Turkish context. We indicate only the associate degree (which lasts two or four years depending on the field of study) and undergraduate education (four years). As may be revealed from the statistics, the number of foreign students enrolling in Turkish universities is increasing year by year, and so do Syrian students. (see; Figure 5). University education can only be pursued after taking the Higher Education Placement Exam. Placement is realized based on several scores beyond the test results; high school graduation scores, the placement or entrance exam score, and ultimately the personal choices that align with the scores examinees received. There are also conditions that special-purpose exams are held to study in some departments such as high technology institutes, police academies, and military academies (CoHE, 1981; UNESCO, 2012).

Students are granted an undergraduate degree following four or six years of education depending on the department they study in. Students are also granted an associate's degree following a two-year education in vocational high schools, which may offer based on the credentials of four-year college

degrees. The legislation on practices that foreign students are subject to for transition to higher education is based on Article 45/f of the Law No. 6287 amended by the Higher Education Law No. 2547 of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) states: "Procedures and principles of admission into higher education institutions for students of foreign nationality and students who spent their entire secondary education abroad shall be set by the Council of Higher Education". In addition, the regulatory principles announced by the CoHE (2019) on the admission of students from other countries necessitate taking the placement test as well.

A barometer study by Erdoğan (2020) reveals Syrians Barometer-2019 research on increased figures of educational attainment level of the Syrian households, before 2011 the average schooling rate in Syria was 62,3%, it was 87,3% in Turkey at that time, and the schooling rate was even lower in North Syria, from where the majority of the Syrians migrated to Turkey had low levels of education. While the current figures show a steady increase in access to higher education which is free of charge to study in state universities for Syrian nationals, who turned out to be on the top of foreign university students list in Turkey with figures around 140 thousand university students. Şimşek and Çorabatır (2016) reveal that the Turkish educational policies enacted facilitate the access process to higher education by Syrian youth living in Turkey, especially, since it enables the waiver of tuition fees in state universities and the provision of over 1,000 scholarships from 2015 onwards at the national level and also the financial support systems international institutions alongside these grants play an important role in the numbers increased (Figure 5). Erdoğan (2020) asserts that this role needs to be strengthened and made sustainable to prevent "lost generations from emerging and developing human capital are common interests for everyone concerned" (p.39). The increase in student numbers in higher education is crucial since tertiary education is a cornerstone towards receiving education and being employed in a position to enable higher living standards. In addition, gains in economic and cultural capital may also impact the social capital of migrants and receive social cohesion in the communities they live. Consequently, it can be argued that the significant efforts and investments done to promote Syrian refugees or other displaced students' access to universities in Turkey can be called to have been effective and the policy enabled to integrate the largest group of Syrian immigrants into the higher education system in the European Higher Education Area (Ergin and Wit, 2020).

Figure 5. Number of Syrian students enrolled in Turkish universities by academic year



Source: Data compiled from Council of Higher Education (CoHE, 2022) statistics of January 2022. https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr

5 Discussion

Given the surrealist high numbers of emergent migrants at the schooling age, Turkey was urged to take immediate measures towards hosting the displaced migrants and making adjustments in the educational context to bring about new models to educate the children via ad hoc policies as the initial emergent solution step to take with little or inadequate resources available and the lack of capacity of educators to teach migrants. The establishments of Temporary Education Centers and the intensive language programs via PIKTES were first-hand solutions. They were effective in hosting the children and complementing their basic educational needs, both in learning the language of the host country and also in complementing the official curriculum from the home country as an emergent solution for that time. In the case of Turkey, the Syrian curriculum was offered in the Arabic language; the teachers who were also among the communities of forced migrants were empowered with teaching opportunities as part-time teachers and received some monetary incentives.

Notwithstanding the remedy provided to solve children's educational basic needs, in the long run, as the migrants continued their stay or reside in the country, the children who accomplished the training through these solution-raising programs fell short and urged policymakers to bring new solutions. Inevitably the temporary solution raising programs needed to be transformed and ultimately closed down so that all migrants of schooling age could pursue their educational aspirations in mainstream public schools. In the case that the educational system needs to bring change as it necessitates urgent solutions to the problems recognized the incremental mode of policy-

making can be adopted (Haddad, 1994). In the current case, it was the educational policy change introduced in public schools that aimed at integrating cohesion and adaptation courses into the official curriculum so that the diverse student populations could fit into the formal schooling process. Nevertheless, as could be observed from the final model, cohesion classes were effective in compromising immediate solutions to the challenges at that moment, but as Johnson and Clark (1982, cited in Haddad, 1994) put it, policies at incremental mode may not promote solutions for challenges that may be anticipated in the schooling contexts for the future, and policymakers need to consider transformative policies so that all children have access to quality education. The factual figures presented in the text show that the political economy of a nation may influence the educational attainment of its population. Nevertheless, the emergent policies toward mainstreaming migrant children may become a turning point for those children's lives and transform the educational opportunities beyond their socio-economic capitals as there is evidence that the life chances of immigrant children from Syria have increased their educational levels compared to the original figures back in their home countries (Erdoğan, 2020). Considering Syrian do not hold an Official Refugee status by Law, they have been able to benefit from the educational services free of charge (Erdoğan and Erdoğan, 2020). Yet, Arar et al. (2020) warn against the ongoing challenges of modifying, transforming, and adding policies in higher education that may develop a reaction towards the incentives granted to higher education student admission policies for migrants, and they warn against the recognition of language barriers, guidance, and lack of documentation during admissions.

Despite the fact that the models introduced above have proven successful to an extent in remedying the challenges that needed to be tackled at that time, future educational policymaking processes need to rely on scientific decisions as a result of evidence-driven data. However, the experience and lessons learned in the case of hosting and educating the large numbers of emergent migrant student populations, the investment in educating the children can provide transformative lessons for nations that may become vulnerable to emergent situations, as in the case of Turkey.

To sum up, we tried to shed light on the magnitude of student population sizes and the emergent policies implemented due to large numbers of displaced children and how they are mainstreamed into public education from the case of Turkey to offer transferable lessons learned or unlearned in more than a decade. The audience of this chapter should be well aware of the policy practice dichotomy in formal schooling in emergent situations, especially from the context of monolingual policy implementation and a country with a highly centralized educational system. Like Napier (2005) put it, implementing educational transformation policies in developing countries, rapid changes with inadequate training and support, and lack of capacity on the side of

practitioners may result in unexpected outcomes. We did not focus on teacher professionalism, teacher education, and their development at this stage, nor did we mention school administration challenges and capabilities of school infrastructures in such emergent educational contexts or refer to the economic challenges that displaced students may bring to nations from multiple dimensions, let alone for a developing country. However, we believe all aspects are crucial and need to be discussed and researched further through uncovering the veil of ignorance of the socio-political context and the willingness of policymakers and practitioners to reach all children equally in the educational arena.

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Finding ways: from imagined to realized educational transitions and trajectories

Anna-Maria S. Marekovic and Anna Liisa Närvänen

1 Introduction

There has been increasing interest in research on the education of newly arrived migrant students (henceforth NAMS) due to increasing number of international migrant youth, in particular refugees, and an awareness of the right to equal and high-quality education for these children (Bunar & Juvonen 2020). Inequalities and achievement gaps between native and immigrant students have been acknowledged (Schleicher 2006) and explained with reference to parents' educational backgrounds (Heath and Brinbaum 2007), language proficiency (Kim and Suárez-Orozco 2015), and age at arrival (Heath and Kilpi-Jakonen 2012). The most vulnerable group pointed out is newly arrived migrant youth in the ages 15-19 who are expected to transition to post-compulsory education (Mussino and Strozza 2012; Koehler and Schneider 2019).

Another strand of research reports high-set academic aspirations of migrant students (e.g. Kao and Tienda 1995; Miyamoto, Seuring and Julian 2020) pointing out the pivotal role of school staff (Bonizzoni, Romito and Cavalli 2016), parents (Hagelskamp, Suárez-Orozco and Hughes 2010), as well as peers and significant transnational relationships (Sarstrand Marekovic 2016; Nilsson Folke 2018) in shaping these aspirations. In contrast, other results show that NAMS perceive introductory programs as places of educational stagnation, suspension or even regression (Sharif 2017; Nilsson Folke 2018). Prolonged enrolment in introductory programs may therefore lead to frustration and disengagement from studies as well as affect future projections and aspirations (Bunar and Juvonen 2021).

These findings suggest that aspirations and educational trajectories of NAMS are contingent and dependent on a complex web of relations and circumstances that influence opportunities and choices. However, research on how migrants' educational aspirations transform over time in relation to life circumstances and social relations is relatively neglected in research (e.g. Boccagni 2017). Our qualitative longitudinal study contributes to this line of research. Through an analysis of NAMS' prospective and retrospective narratives of their educational pathways we examine the multiple transitions that

take place over time and how aspirations and trajectories are transformed, i.e. from introductory program, via upper secondary school, and onto tertiary education or working life. The research questions are:

- How do the educational trajectories of NAMS evolve from arrival in Sweden to the transition to tertiary education or working life?
- How are the students' aspirations transformed over time and how are they related to their life circumstances?

To address these questions, we pay attention to the *process* of moving through the educational system, that is, continuities and discontinuities of transitions, how they are prospectively and retrospectively described in terms of opportunities and obstacles for desired trajectories, and the ascribed meanings of these processes. The results nuance the rather gloomy image of NAMS' underachievement by illustrating how young migrants also find ways to navigate over time and in the present situation to create futures for themselves. The analysis is based on a longitudinal study where six students who arrived in Sweden in the ages 14-17 were interviewed at two points in time.

1.1 NAMS in the Swedish educational system

In Sweden, schooling for NAMS in the ages 16-19 is organized in separate Language Introduction Programs (henceforth LIP) aimed to prepare them for further education, acquire language skills, and provide knowledge of the educational system. LIP is one of four introductory programs for young people who do not qualify for the mainstream programs and is thus not an official upper secondary program. LIP is supposed to be temporary, and time in the program should be restricted to allow for educational progression (Bunar and Juvonen 2021). To transition from LIP to a mainstream program the student needs to pass grades in 8 subjects to be eligible for a vocational program and 12 for an academic program (Lundahl and Lindblad 2018). If failed to pass the required grades, moving to another introductory program can enable transition to a mainstream program but will prolong the time before transition. Only graduation from an academic program will allow a smooth transition to higher education, or the student must take complementary courses to qualify. Furthermore, the age limit for admission to upper secondary school is 20 years of age, after which students must turn to adult education to complete their schooling.

Some scholars claim that NAMS may be held back in LIP for a longer time than needed, which complicates the transition to upper secondary education (Bunar and Juvonen 2021), and is mirrored in the educational progression. Only around one third of NAMS make the transition to a mainstream

program within five years (Lundahl and Lindblad 2018). Relatively little is known about the experiences of NAMS who do make the transition to mainstream education (for an exception see Sarstrand Marekovic 2016) and how their trajectories and aspirations evolve over time.

1.2 Theoretical frame

Although our focus is on how different experiences of transitions shape educational trajectories we argue, following Cuconato, Walther and Zannoni (2016), for an approach that views education and life course as integral processes in the lives of young people. Accordingly, educational trajectories evolve from a dialectic relationship between structure and agency, as social and institutional structures provide the context within which choices are made (Giele and Elder 1998). An analysis of educational trajectories should thus, consider institutional conditions of the educational system as well as meaning-making processes negotiated individually and in interaction with others. We also employ the life-course concept 'linked lives' to explore the ways in which individual trajectories influence and are influenced by others in terms of opportunities and limitations, support and control (Hutchinson 2005).

Transitions are central for our analysis as they constitute dynamic institutionally initiated passages from one status or circumstance to another (Elder 1985) and, thus, shape and reshape the evolving (educational) trajectory over time. Although there is a standardised trajectory through the school system that coincides with normative expectations of age and phases of the life course, it is vital to recognise that individual pathways and transitions do not necessarily progress as expected. Transitions between different school forms or levels may be smooth for some students but hindered, delayed, or circumscribed for others (Cuconato 2016). Therefore, analysing how individual students move through transition points will contribute to an understanding of how different circumstances open up or curtail future life chances.

Understanding students' trajectories presupposes understanding their past and present experiences, but also their aspirations in terms of desires and interpretations of future possibilities. Aspirations refer to 'representations of what one's future might and should look like, given the present circumstances and the experience of the past as re-codified from the 'here-and-now'' (Boccagni 2017: 2).

2 Method

A longitudinal design with prospective and retrospective interviews with the same individuals (Neale 2016) was used to examine the educational transitions NAMS encounter and how aspirations and trajectories are transformed and evolve over time. The data consists of in-depth interviews conducted at two points in time with six students who arrived in Sweden in the ages 14-17. The first interviews were conducted as part of a larger research project concerning NAMS' experiences of the Swedish educational system and included interviews with 30 NAMS. The interviews were semi-structured and covered topics like opportunities and constraints in introductory education; supporting relationships in school and private life; aspirations for upper secondary school and future life. The students were asked for consent to be contacted again after around five years. Around half of the initial population provided contact information and agreed to participate in the follow-up study. A challenge of longitudinal research is to maintain participants over time (Thomson and Holland 2003) which was experienced also in our project. When we asked for a second interview some participants declined for various reasons, others had moved or were unreachable. Ultimately, six participants were willing to be interviewed again. The second (semi-structured) interview included similar topics: transition to and experiences of upper secondary education; supporting relationships; transition to tertiary education or working life and future aspirations.

The backgrounds of the participants varied in ways that mirror the configuration of NAMS in Sweden as a heterogenous group (Lundahl and Lindblad 2018). A majority arrived in Sweden as refugees and others as family reunification. All had received permanent residence status at the time of the first interview. For closer background information, see Table 1 below.

Table 1. Participants Backgrounds

Participant (fictional name)	Gender	Country of origin	Age at arrival in Sweden	Years in school prior to migration	Parent(s) with tertiary education
Assal	Female	Iraq	16	9	Yes
Avin	Female	Iraq	14	8	No
Ahmed	Male	Palestine	15	10	Yes
Aram	Male	Syria	15	9	Yes
Lucas	Male	Ghana	17	10	No
Mojib	Male	Afghanistan	17	9	Yes

The interviews lasted 1-2 hours, recorded digitally and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The participants were at the onset of both interviews informed of the aims of the project and how the results would be used to ensure their informed consent to participate in the project. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study if they wished and assured that the interviews would be anonymised using fictional names. Both rounds of interviews have obtained ethical vetting.

The analysis proceeded in several steps beginning with a close reading of all transcripts and memo-writing to get acquainted with the data. Thereafter, a within-case analysis of each interview was conducted as a chronological reconstruction of the individual trajectory to trace changes and continuities over time and included descriptive summaries as well as key quotations (Neale 2016; Thomson and Holland 2003). The case profiles were structured by common themes guided by the research questions: experiences of different educational levels, transitions, aspirations, and significant social relations. In the next step, a cross-case reading and more focused coding of the themes from the case profiles was conducted. This enabled comparison across the sample to identify commonalities as well as idiosyncrasies in the data. Moreover, this phase also generated new theoretical insight to the analysis as different trajectories and their properties could be discerned (Neale 2016). The analysis thus carefully investigated the complex interplay of context and relations that embed the transitional processes and shed light on how different trajectories are realized.

3 Findings

The analysis of the narratives of six NAMS about how their educational trajectories and lives unfold from time in introductory education to higher education or working life revealed two main trajectories; coherent and fragmented trajectory that differ in relation to central characteristics. Distinctive to the fragmented trajectory is discontinuities of phases and transitions leading to a gap between aspirations and achievements that prompts a re-definition to more feasible goals, often from higher education to vocational jobs. The coherent trajectory, on the other hand, shows a clear continuity of phases and transitions with no critical events that disrupt the trajectory and thus the aspirations only need minor calibration. Avin, Lucas and Mojib describe fragmented trajectories while the narratives by Assal, Ahmed and Aram reveal coherent trajectories. The presentation below is structured chronologically beginning with experiences and aspirations in introductory education which reveal the commonalities in experiences. Thereafter, the evolvement of the two types of trajectories will be examined separately to explicate the particu-

larities in relation to experiences of transitions, evolving aspirations and meaning of social relations.

3.1 High educational aspirations and challenges in introductory education

Migration to Sweden marks a major biographical event in the life course of the participants and called for re-orientations where new and different alternatives for their futures opened (Boccagni 2017). Migration was mainly interpreted as a chance of a better education and thus a better future compared to their home country, as described by Lucas who migrated to reunite with his father in Sweden: "I thought it was good. Because in Ghana not many people have money and such, so it was a huge opportunity for me".

In line with existing research (Sharif 2017; Nilsson Folke 2018), the young students in our study uniformly held to the values of higher education and were an integral part of their narratives of the future. They expressed aspirations to become physicians (Assal, Ahmed), astronomer (Aram), economist (Lucas), pharmacist (Avin) and agronomist (Mojib). Ahmed expressed his ambitions like this at the first interview:

> I have a dream to become a physician in the future. That is why I put a lot of effort into my studies. I spend a lot of time doing homework, especially Swedish, so I can pass the courses and go to upper secondary school.

Aspirations for prestigious professions were aligned with ambitions to attend an academic upper secondary school program. However, understanding the complex structure and rules of the educational system and the implication for different educational pathways is challenging to all new migrants (Koehler and Schneider 2019) and was also expressed in our study. The students described having little control over their educational progression in this stage, as these decisions were made by the school staff (Bunar and Juvonen 2019), as illustrated in these quotes:

> No, I was never allowed to choose [where to attend the LIP]. I didn't get to choose upper secondary school either. The teachers told me to choose this program [with attention to second language learners], because it would be better for me. I couldn't choose anything else. Assal

> I passed 10 subjects in one semester. But I didn't pass Swedish. So, I couldn't go directly to upper secondary school. They told me to take another year in LIP […]. Ahmed

The main reason for having to repeat LIP, according to the students, was that they struggled to get a passing grade in Swedish. The participants spent be-

tween 2 and 4 years in introductory education and the prolongation of time outside mainstream education was interpreted as an obstacle that left them behind compared to peers their own age, in Sweden and in their home countries (Nilsson Folke 2018). Ahmed said: "In my country they [his friends] have finished upper secondary school. They are starting university now. […] That is why I want to finish school and go to university too". Lagging behind generated a sense of urgency, especially for the older students approaching 20 years of age and thus facing the risk of being directed to adult education. The students thus experienced being off time in their educational trajectory and expected life course phase (Hutchinson 2005).

The experiences in introductory education were primarily positive and fuelled the students' high educational aspirations, but the overarching risk of having to repeat LIP implied a large degree of uncertainty about progress in one's education which affected the transitions and subsequently their trajectories in different ways.

3.2 Discontinuous transition to post-compulsory education

Our analysis reveals how some NAMS struggle in the transition and must level their aspirations to more feasible goals. The narratives of three participants, Avin, Lucas and Mojib, are characterized by one or several ruptures and compromises with one's ambitions and are, inspired by Cuconato (2016), labelled here as discontinuous transitions. The ruptures are of various kinds, but the participants all had to make choices that were not in line with their desires, which prompted a re-consideration of their futures, from academic to vocational or from a preferred program to a substitute.

Avin's transition involved a re-consideration of upper secondary program, from a social science program to natural science. The reason was language struggles as she realized her language skills were not sufficient compared with other students'. She consulted the guidance counsellor, who advised her to switch to a natural science program with extra support for second language learners. She explained: "It was not really the subjects I wanted to take. Physics is so difficult! But I think I managed the other subjects fairly well". The fact that the local school offered a program with attention to second language learners is a relevant contextual factor (Sarstrand Marekovic 2016) that affected her choice and subsequently her trajectory. Avin adhered to her aspirations to attend an academic program, but the switch was neither in line with her academic interests nor strengths and can thus be labelled 'discontinuous academic transition' (Cuconato 2016).

The two other cases highlight ruptures and re-orientations that lead to downwards levelling aspirations, from academic to vocational tracks, concep-

tualised as 'discontinuous vocational transitions' (ibid.). Lucas realised during his final semester in the LIP that he was not going to reach the necessary 12 grades to be admitted to an academic program in line with his initial hopes of becoming an economist. Instead, he applied to vocational programs that could create opportunities to get a job.

> When I was in LIP I didn't have a clear idea of what I should do, so I just chose something. I picked the business and administration program because I wanted workplace training and I wanted to find a job. It was important for me to get a job.

In the second interview he describes the choice as unfortunate, because he didn't appreciate the school or the behaviour of the students in his class. His further reflections provide a contextualisation and highlights life circumstances that are relevant for understanding his changed aspirations and choices. Lucas migrated with two younger siblings to reunite with his father in Sweden, while his mother remained in Ghana. He recalls how he struggled to stay on good terms with his father, but it did not work, which created an untenable situation and he turned to the social services to find an apartment. From his first year in upper secondary school Lucas had to make a living and manage his way through school on his own. Considering this the shifting focus from higher education to securing work is relatable. Also age became a decisive factor which limited Lucas' possibilities to change program. He was approaching 20 years old, and the only other option would be to turn to adult education. In light of that he felt he had no other choice than to stay on.

Also Mojib had to make choices that were not in line with his initial aspirations to attend a natural science program. He struggled in the LIP to meet the grade requirements but failed to transition to a mainstream program. Instead, he transitioned into another introductory program where he studied for one year to acquire the missing grades. Meanwhile he became too old for upper secondary school and turned to adult education. Even this transition was ruptured because of insufficient grades. Mojib took up a job in a restaurant to support himself while studying to raise his grades. After six months he was able to reapply and was enrolled to a course to become a nursing assistant. Mojib's process can also be related to social circumstances. Mojib's father was separated from the family during migration and Mojib was left to care for his mother and younger brother the first years in Sweden. His mother was unwell and needed a lot of support, for example in contact with health care and authorities, which Mojib provided. He explained in the second interview:

> In the beginning [arrival in Sweden] my mother was alone, and she didn't know the language, so I had to go with her to the hospital all the time. […] Now as well, for both my mom and dad. […] when they call from the health centre, I must take the call [for them].

Because of the responsibilities to his family Mojib was absent from many of his classes in the LIP and thus struggled to get the grades. Social relations and obligations should be considered in understanding the discontinuous transition for both Lucas and Mojib, but with different implications. Hutchinson emphasises that the 'family is seen as the primary source of both support and control' (2005:147) in discussing the meaning of linked lives. Our two cases show how lack of support or strong family dependencies can limit choices and thus impact trajectories.

3.3 Smooth transition to post-compulsory education

A smooth academic transition refers to a linear progression into an academic program in correspondence with one's own ambitions (Cuconato 2016). Assal, Ahmed and Aram made successful transitions to natural science programs in line with their ambitions. They thus represent a minority of NAMS in Sweden (Lundahl and Lindblad 2018). Assal and Ahmed had very clear goals and were firmly set on becoming physicians and the natural science program was a definite steppingstone. Assal described her choice like this: "It was my only choice. Everyone in my family studies natural science. If you even think of studying something else, you will be an outcast (laughs). So, I never considered anything else.". Aram, on the other hand, had a less clear view of his future but to proceed to higher education was indisputable and to study natural science was a way to keep his options open, something he reflected on at the second interview: "I didn't think too much about my future, not until the second year of upper secondary school. […] Of course, I wanted to continue to upper secondary school and to university, but I hadn't thought about what I wanted to study." Common to the smooth transition is thus that the educational aspirations were not contested but could be preserved without adjustment throughout the transition.

A common pattern for these students, and significant to acknowledge in understanding their aspirations, is the cultural capital that they possess. All of them have at least one parent with tertiary education, a factor which has proven to be central in explaining immigrants' educational achievements (Heath and Brinbaum 2007). The students described how education was valued in their families and the expectations to aim for a professional degree was indisputable. The students described their parents as highly invested in their education, which was also converted into practical assistance with schoolwork.

> He [the father] doesn't know much Swedish but as soon as I open the [physics] book he says: 'Oh, I remember that one!' and then he explains it to me. […] I got an A on the last physics test. I cannot believe it! My dad helped me a lot. Assal

Assal's father had a degree in engineering from Iraq and could give her tutoring advice. She also explicitly recognized how her parents provided the material conditions so she could focus on her education: "I have everything. I am safe, I have books and someone who can help me always. Why shouldn't I get good grades?". The narratives from Ahmed and Aram mirror a similar situation with supportive parents who have faith in their children's capacity. Aram said: "Whatever I want they will encourage me to it. […] I can choose what I want, as long as I get good grades". The meaning of linked lives (Hutchinson 2005) for a smooth transition is thus an emphasis on academic, material and emotional support from the parents to the child.

Although the three participants describe positive experiences in upper secondary school, such as new friendships and praise from teachers that were valuable for their continued trajectories, as emphasised in much research (Sarstrand Marekovic 2016; Bonizzoni et al. 2016) they all experienced limitations in relation to their Swedish language skills. This did not just translate to lower grades in Swedish but affected their achievements in other subjects negatively, especially subjects that required advanced written presentations, such as social science subjects. This raised doubts that some options for higher education may not be achievable. Assal described how she started to realize that her dream of becoming a physician was unlikely:

> When I started the second year, I was convinced I was going to become a physician. I was so determined. But at the development talks the teachers said: "It's difficult to become a physician in Sweden. You need to get A in all courses. Can't you consider something else?" I said no. But when I got my first C in Swedish the second year, I started to realize that it is impossible. […] At first, I was crushed. My parents said that I could study to become a physician abroad and that they would help me. But I wanted to stay in Sweden. […] So, I started to consider choosing something else, with lower requirements. I thought I'd become a dentist, that is easier.

The experiences caused the students to reconsider earlier educational aspirations and goals. For Ahmed and Assal the goal of becoming physicians seemed unrealistic and they started to form new attainable educational goals. Aram had less clear set goals but was also aware of the consequences of limited language skills and started to consider the possibility to apply to university programs abroad. Consequently, none of the three participants abandoned the idea of higher education, but they did calibrate their aspirations to more achievable educational and professional goals.

3.4 Transition to working life

At the second interview three of the participants had made a transition to the labour market. The narratives of Avin, Lucas and Mojib are characterized by continued ruptures and illustrate challenges of transition from education to work life but also depict how aspirations for higher education continue to be articulated.

Avin left upper secondary school without a degree and enrolled in adult education to complement courses to get her certificate. Then she applied for university but was rejected. After a year of unemployment, she got enrolled in training to become an interpreter. Alongside she applied to university programs and was eventually accepted to become a social pedagogue. Halfway into the program Avin was diagnosed with cancer. She had to drop out and go through an almost year-long recovery. The disease marked a sharp break in her trajectory, which made her question and redefine her educational choices and future. She tried to resume her studies: “I studied, but I don’t know if I passed any of the courses. I lost motivation.”. Instead, she got a temporary job as an administrator at a service company, and she also got pregnant with her first child. She still holds on to the aspiration to graduate from university in the future, but her short-term perspective is on motherhood.

Lucas and Mojib entered working life after graduation, but neither of them have a permanent position. Lucas is working part time in a small shop and Mojib has a temporary position as an assistant nurse. Both describe that they are content with the work and their present life situation. Near-future aspirations are focused on getting a permanent position to secure a steady income while distant-future aspirations entail hope of higher education. However, the long-term plans are abstract or difficult to realize in the current circumstances. Lucas describes his aspirations for higher education, yet these are not materialised in action:

> I’m doing good, but I’m a bit confused, what should I do in the future? […] Last year I was thinking of going back to school, but it didn’t work out. I had two plans, first engineering, building roads and such, and then I thought about firefighting. But I didn’t know what to choose. […] I want to study something where they need people. I can’t study something where I can’t find work.

The economic aspect is relevant as Lucas cannot rely on anyone else to provide for him, which affects his perceptions of future opportunities. The lack of support from family limits his opportunities to progress in his educational trajectory.

Mojib aspires to become a registered nurse. He applied to adult education for complementary courses but was not able to keep up the course work as he had to work at the same time and lost his place. The narrative emphasises his

strong responsibilities to his family, involving continued assistance in relation to authorities, but also economic obligations (Boccagni 2017) which binds him to his parents: "I have to stay with the family, they need help, and I must chip in with the rent as well. That is why I cannot move.". The quote illustrates the significance of linked lives (Hutchinson 2005) when family members are dependent for assistance and financial help. Providing this support is time-consuming and involves a great deal of responsibility which circumscribe the possibility to make choices to further the educational trajectory.

3.5 Transition to tertiary education

Assal, Ahmed and Aram were all in their final years of university studies at the time of the second interview. Although they had calibrated their aspirations, they were now in prestigious programs to become pharmacist, mechanical engineer and computer software engineer. For all, a swift transition to higher education was desirable. They "didn't want to waste any more time" (Nilsson Folke 2018) and therefore applied to university directly after graduation. The descriptions of their choices of education refer to an interest in the specific subjects but also that they calculated with a relatively easy transition to the world of work. An education that was in demand on the labour market was thus a relevant consideration when applying to university, as described by Ahmed:

> Initially, I wanted to become a physician, or a dentist, but my grades were not good enough […] so I had to choose something else of interest. So, I thought, since I enjoy math, physics and problem-solving, I could choose engineering. […] There are quite good prospects in Sweden, there is a job guarantee, so to speak.

Furthermore, they all recognized that the transition involved challenges that were not only scholastic. Moving to a new place without their family took some time to get used to. Assal dropped out of the program she first attended because it was too demanding on her.

> At first, I was accepted in X-town, but I didn't like it. I got so scared, because it was my first time away from home and I dropped out. […] I spent a whole semester sitting at home and then my sister asked, "Should we apply to Y-town together?". […] We were both accepted to the program and moved there. This time she was scared, but I was experienced (laughs) and said "But we are here together!"

The meaning of social support and security in transitions is obvious in Assal's narrative. The family is a source of strength and crucial for a successful transition. The families are present in the participants' narratives of the distant future as well. After getting their diplomas, and perhaps a few years of work experience, they want to settle down close to their families.

> After graduation I want to start working, to see what interests me. Sweden is my 'final destination'. What comes in between, I don't know. […] I could work in Dubai for a couple of years to save up some money, and then come back to Sweden, buy a house, a car. Aram

4 Conclusion

The paper aims to explore how the educational trajectories of NAMS evolve as a process over time, through obstacles and opportunities in relation to transitions and how aspirations transform and intersect with different life circumstances. The approach emphasises an understanding where educational trajectories are entwined with other life spheres and relations (Cuconato et al. 2016). Our analysis reveals commonalities in experiences in introductory education, such as high set educational aspirations and challenges of meeting the educational demands such as learning the Swedish language (Sharif 2017) and pointing to the transition to mainstream education as a bifurcation in educational trajectories of NAMS. Foremost, the analysis of transitions, aspirations and linked lives, reveal two distinct types of trajectories, here labelled fragmented and coherent trajectory.

The fragmented trajectory is marked by discontinuities of phases and transitions, where ruptures may be single or multiple. Characteristic for the trajectory is a gap between aspirations and achievements that prompt a re-definition to more feasible goals, often from higher education to vocational jobs. Previous research shows how NAMS tend to be sorted into vocational tracks (Bonizzoni et al. 2016; Koehler and Schneider 2019), which limits the possibilities for pursuing higher education and thus involve a downwards levelling of aspirations. Our analysis shows how the re-definitions are brought to the fore in transitions between educational levels, in relation to major life events and the ways in which lives are linked to others. The fragmented trajectory is characterised by either weak family support or by obligations and dependencies that limit how options and choices are perceived (Hutchinson 2005) and acted on.

The coherent trajectory is signified by a clear continuity of phases and transitions, from introductory education to post-compulsory education and further on to tertiary education, with no apparent critical events that disrupt

the trajectory or alter the aspirations. The initial high set educational aspirations are upheld relatively intact over time, with only minor calibration, concerning specific future occupation. The meaning of how linked lives (Hutchinson 2005) can render support and security in transitions and assist the individual in making choices is evident in the coherent trajectory. The family, especially the relationship to parents, provides academic, material and emotional resources that aid in the progression of the trajectory.

One ambition with our study was to nuance the account of poor academic achievements and downward trajectories of NAMS, that also imply lack of agency. Our findings show that neither of the two trajectories lead to disadvantaged positions for NAMS or indicate a lack of agency. Rather the participants are resourceful and active in relation to the opportunities that are present and the resources they dispose of in finding ways to manage transitions and realize educational trajectories. There are, however, limitations to our study. A challenge in longitudinal research is to retain the research participants over the course of the study (Neale 2019), which we experienced. This indicates that we may have a skewed sample. It is likely that NAMS with less successful trajectories are missing in our study and that the variety of educational trajectories is greater than what our analysis reveal. However, the longitudinal design also made it possible to analyse the *process* of doing transitions in education both prospectively and retrospectively. The analysis showed that transitions, especially from introductory to mainstream education, are directly consequential for how aspirations are sustained or redirected and what kind of educational trajectories are seen as probable for the students. This, again, highlights the importance of understanding the interconnectedness between structures such as the institutional conditions and agency.

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Unaccompanied minor’s migration is also an inner journey

Sandra Cadiou and Patricia Mothes

1 Introduction

The UAM or unaccompanied minor is a young person without a reference adult who can take care of him or her. Many of them have migrated for various reasons and because they aspire to a more serene life (Etiemble and Zanna, 2018). As adolescents, their migration reconfigures their lives both academically and professionally, as well as personally in the French political and administrative context (Hédoux and Velut, 2020; Przybyl, 2017; Thomas, 2021; Paté, 2021; Long, 2021). How do they experience this migration? What do they break with? How do they reorient their lives? We look at three singular cases in the Toulouse context and try to understand how they evolve in the French political framework in terms of systemic oppression.

2 Theoretical framework

Our approach to the social world in general and to research, in particular, is not neutral. We are situated in a materialist perspective which posits as a prerequisite a world thought to be organized according to a set of systemic dominations applying in a crosswise manner to its actors (Boussahba et al., 2021). While there is no question here of reducing all social facts to economic mechanisms, we postulate that economic functioning should not be forgotten in favor of a reflection that would only consider an approach in terms of culture. From this point of view, the question of migratory movements can only be considered through a systemic lens that raises the question of both interstate dominations and their expression at the level of the actors.

We say oppression and domination, not discrimination. In this, we wish to emphasize a treatment that is certainly about the difference but not only. Discrimination (De Rudder, Vourc’h, 2006) refers to a differentiated or even unequal treatment that could be reduced to a mathematical calculation, based on the differential value of different groups of individuals that could be as-

sessed. Thus, speaking of discrimination against UAM would mean considering exhaustively what would be equal or unequal treatment of another similar group, for example, the non-migrant population. It would then be possible to study how UAM enjoy (or do not) the same rights to schooling as other adolescents of their age.

We aim to think further, postulating that this differential value always applies in the same way to the same groups of individuals, and this is in a systemic logic that structures the social world. Thus, the materialist approach considers that these differentials are related to the unequal social divisions of labor: domestic space and the labor market, productive labor, and reproductive labor (Kergoat, 2001). Labor would then have a central place in the explanation of social phenomena because all discrimination and social inequalities would be linked to these social divisions of labor. This example makes particular sense when the subject of the research is migration. Migration processes are inseparable from the history of colonization and the expansion of the great European empires, which went off to find elsewhere the labor and wealth that their territories lacked. However, colonization is an example of a process that is not simply a matter of prejudice that produces discrimination. Here, a state decides to invade a territory and a population and subject it to its yoke, to implement policies of social segregation, which will then be supported by a legitimizing discourse such as racism.

Now, when we say "racist", we mean "victim of racism", which refers to the use of the neologism "racialized" (Poiret, 2011) to designate a person who is likely to belong to a minority group about his or her supposed ethnic origin, and who sees him or herself as a victim of systematic discrimination. "Racization", far from being as biological as it claims, is a process of the social and cultural construction of the other as inferior, which aims at social exclusion (Guillaumin, 1972).

Consequently, the work presented here is particularly in line with the theoretical framework of clinical sociology, understood as a global thought taking into account the unconscious dynamics that structure the subject. We quote Gaulejac's words here:

> "Clinical sociology aims to analyze the socio-psychic processes that characterize the complex and intimate relations between the being of man and the being of society (…) the clinical approach consists of developing methods for analyzing social phenomena as closely as possible to the lived experience of the actors. The object of the clinical method can be defined succinctly as the study of man in situations and interactions. This sociology favors the emergence of a word in a situation in a relationship that is both inter-subjective and social"[1] (Gaulejac, 2019, p. 15).

1 The authors' translation.

In the framework we are dealing with today, the question of migration and its effects on the subject must be understood from a political perspective that considers both the international and national processes, but also its implications in the processes of subjectivation that result from it. We address here the migration process of UAM as a stigma (Goffman, 1963) of a still vivid French colonial history that is reinvented in the injunction to integrate that is given to them. We also study migration as a place of passage, both geographical and singular, and of identity in the case of young adolescents. We question the place of migration as a rite of construction, of subjectivation, and study its manifestations and forms through the analysis of the singular discourses of three young adolescents.

The fact that we are talking about adolescents is not insignificant. Adolescence refers to a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood characterized by physical but also psychological and social changes sometimes accompanied by rites of passage in ancient traditional societies and often longer in contemporary developed societies (between 12 and 20 years) (Csikszentmihalyi, 2021).

From the physical point of view, the human being reaches his final height and has great capacities. He enters a stage of life where he can fertilize. This biological and sexual stage has its psychic corollary.

It is with the support of a clinical approach of psychoanalytical orientation that we will investigate the singular dimension. The UAM is therefore an individual in a situation that we observe from the angle of his or her psyche. We then speak of the subject of the unconscious. A hidden part acts and the ego is not the master (Freud, 2010: 1917).

Adolescence constitutes a stage of reorganization of the Oedipus complex (Freud, 1987:1905). Thus, the balance between the ego, the id., and the super-ego breaks down and is reorganized (Freud A., 2001:1936), leading to what is sometimes described as a crisis that can take violent forms, delinquency, and even generate some pathologies: phobias, depressive disorders, etc. (Emmanuelli, 2016). Adolescence is situated in a dynamic of desire and transgression to obtain enjoyment (Heinis, 2021). However, this period is not always chaotic. Anthropology shows how rites of passage (Van Gennep, 1909; cited by Jeffrey, 2008) accompany this mutation: religious rites, diplomas, military service, etc.

The UAM migrates twice: through the migratory experience and adolescence. This would be a "metis-age"[2] according to Sironi (2011 cited by Conne 2012) "entangled between filiation, affiliation and migration" (Corne, 2012, p.1). For UAM, this stage would be even more complex, as it would involve forgetting their loved ones to access a more socially comfortable situation (Shafak 2008 cited by Conne 2012).

2 We use the French text also understandable in English.

> "The various facets of the UAM's adolescence – the adolescent process itself (which is too often neglected), their distance from their cultural environment, the fragility of their parents, and a more or less recent traumatic history – make the identification process linked to intrapsychic upheaval more delicate" (von Overbeck Ottino & Ottino, 2001, paragraph 39).

It is the concept of fragmented-being developed by Castoriadis (1975) that guides our reflection: here, the emphasis is placed on the fragmentary character of the singular structure made up of five strata: the first-being, the living-being, the psychic-being, the social-historical-being, the subject-being. This structuring makes it possible to take into account the subject in its multiple dimensions and thus to establish the thought of the subjectivation process as a transition. It tends to show the emergence of the imaginary as a power of shaping until the radical affirmation of human subjectivity as a creative power.

We consider UAM as bearers of a singular transition process concerning their psyche and their social position, but also as creators of transition for the European world that welcomes them. Thus, the imaginary that generates migration here generates the imaginary concerning migration and creates a dynamic process of social invention/reinvention that constitutes the present time as a time of transition and creation. For if migration creates the migrant, the migrant creates migration, and migrant and migration make society.

> "It is true that, as such, the institution that is posited in each case can exist only as norms of self-identity, as inertia and as a mechanism of self-perpetuation; but, equally true, that of which there should be self-identity, the instituted signification, can exist only by altering itself, and alters itself through doing and social representing/saying. In this way, the norm itself alters itself through the alteration of that of which it should be the norm of identity, awaiting the moment it will be shattered by the explicit positing of another norm." (Castoriadis, 1998: p. 372)

We will study here how, in the particular case of the UAM, this process of racization not only tends to be exercised at both the individual and state levels but also influences their identity construction and constitutes a factor of subjectivation.

3 Methodology

The data is constructed through semi-directed interviews conducted with three young UAM met between 2017 and 2020 within a welcoming collective in the southwest region of France. As we worked as trainers on the schooling course of the association, we proposed pupils participate as volunteers in the research. And Malik, Martinez, and Felipe accepted.

The questions asked are related to migration, which is the subject of our research, while allowing the interviewees to speak as freely as possible. For instance, we asked them about their schooling in Africa, if there was an interruption in schooling and why, how was their migration, what are their dreams about schooling now, and about life in the future. But the psychoanalytically oriented clinical methodology in educational sciences does not use a fixed list of questions because of the semi-directed nature of the interview. The topics cannot be fully described, because the researcher must follow the way the interviewees talk and relate their thoughts. So young men need to speak freely to expose in their discourse their way of organizing their thoughts, in particular their unconscious ones.

The semi-direction of the interviews aims at collecting information on the object of the research while allowing the subject to elaborate his speech in free association. In this way, the unconscious part of the subject can manifest itself through the chain of signifiers, breaks in rational logic, slips of the tongue…

Through this psychoanalytically oriented clinical entry, we construct clinical didactic vignettes (Passeron and Revel, 2005; Carnus & Terrisse 2013) aiming to retrace the subject's logic around the ordeal of the migratory journey, the ordeal being understood in the sense of the encounter with the Real of migration and how the subject verbalizes about it through his Imaginary and the Symbolic (Lacan, 1974).

This epistemology of the sciences of observation (Devereux, 1967) relates to our subjective positions as researchers. Far from being a hindrance, they allow, on the contrary, the transferential effects to be realized in the encounter and to bring out a little of the subjects. For our part, we specify that we are involved in the schooling of the UAM in this group and that the history of our family ancestors has variously encountered migration. Our intellectual and research position is based on this background.

The clinical vignettes of the migration of the three UAMs are the object of discussion. In line with our theoretical framework, which is both clinical-psychoanalytical and sociological, we wish to grasp the psychic forces at play within an intimate history with its social and political context.

The following section will provide some elements to frame the case of each UAM and in the discussion, we will add other elements from these clinical vignettes to further explore issues of continuity and reorientation about oppression, domination, and racization.

4 Overview of clinical vignettes

4.1 Martinez

Born in the Central African Republic, Martinez lived with his mother. He spoke Sango and attended school *"super well"*. As a football fan, he dreamed of becoming an inspector by watching "*series and films*". But during his fifth year, his mother died, and "*there was no one left to support me and pay for schooling, clothes and school bags*". He left school: "*when she is no longer there [...] there were no more dreams"* and thus decided to leave CAR.

Martinez began his migration two years ago in the hope of getting an education. He went to Morocco but had to work: "*I had to pay for my house*", then to Spain where he went to school for three months and learned a little Spanish, and finally to France. "*I said one day that... that one day I would go to France if I became an inspector [...] and I would go and visit Paris, it was my dream country*". Three months and a fortnight ago, he arrived in Bordeaux and then in Toulouse.

His main desire was to learn, "*because I could read and write but I didn't have a good handwriting"*. He also wanted to "*deepen my knowledge in other fields*". He would like to play basketball, to follow "*a little training... either in cooking or in building electricity...*". For the moment this is not the case: "*it requires a lot of things that I have not learned... um, fulfilled those conditions"*. In the meantime, he followed the courses offered by the collective and made progress.

The form of teaching is very different and more effective according to him: fewer students, more material, and a benevolent and encouraging approach. *"In our school, when you didn't know, someone would beat you, you're gonna be told off...even be insulted... overall some teachers said that you were the one becoming delinquent, thief."* Martinez talked about his relationship with a volunteer trainer "*it touched me because I said I was too bad in math and she said no, but you're not bad, you can do it, it touched me a lot"*.

4.2 Felipe

Felipe was born in Guinea. As a child, he imagines himself as a footballer or a diplomat. He spoke Pular, Sousou, French, and English because of the school, and a little Arabic. He went to school until the 9th grade. When his

mother died, he was entrusted to his aunt and stopped school for a year and a half/two years to work. His relationship with his cousins was not very good. The political situation was difficult: "*it's dangerous*". In contrast, he had a dream about France: "*democracy… er, wealth… great men… great thinkers*" "*these were the causes that pushed me to come to France*".

He went through Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, and Felipe mentioned racism, then Spain where he took some courses "*and then I arrived in France*" "*but it's really a very, very, very difficult path*" of about five months.

This migration is described as an ordeal of which he was unaware:

> "if… you find yourself in (sigh/smile) the desert and you manage to… get out of it you have another one too… another problem… it will be the sea… and after all that you go back to Europe… and there is the administration".

Felipe discovered minors on the street, the interrogation of the DDAEOMIE[3]. He was not recognized as a minor "*that's what worries me the most*" and was welcomed by the collective. He attended classes there and was enrolled in a vocational baccalaureate because of his good level. "*What I want to do is… to work with my hands, to do something really… a trade…*". Felipe was recognized as a minor on appeal: he no longer depended on voluntary work, went to live in a hostel, and could follow an apprenticeship since he has a legal representative and therefore earns money. He wants to continue with a BTS[4], although he aspires to diplomacy, and philosophy, and quotes Sartre.

Learning here is different according to him: fewer students, more methods. He also emphasizes the context that helps: libraries, the internet, and educated parents who can help. He imagines himself starting a family and living here.

4.3 Malik

Malik was 17 years old when he arrived on French territory, coming from Mali after nearly two years of a journey whose precise details we would never know. A member of the Fulani ethnic group, he lived the first part of his life in a very remote rural region of Mali, where he worked in the fields with his family (he mentioned his father and his aunt). He had never been to school in Mali, and spoke Bambara but could not read or write.

3 Departmental Reception, Assessment and Orientation Facility for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors.

4 French Technical diploma obtained two years after the "baccalauréat" (graduation).

Malik explained that he had to leave his village when his father died*: "father die yes old man very sick him die and aunt say me no more place at home too poor too many children not possible to take care of me so I have to leave"*. He then left alone and traveled with a friend, relying on him for the final destination. He did not plan to go to France, said he just had to leave, and almost seemed to have ended up in France "*by chance"*, during a conversation in which the possibility of going to school in France was mentioned, and thus to realize what seems to have been a previously unattainable project.

Welcomed into the group in which we were working at the time, Malik took part assiduously in the lessons given by the volunteers, and quickly progressed, showing unlimited motivation. After the State recognized his minority, he was able to take a vocational training course in cooking, then completed a complementary qualification, and is now a chef in a retirement home.

5 Discussion: An internal journey of ruptures and reorientations that also talks about systemic oppression

5.1 Ruptures

All three cases mention a family separation that was the origin of the migration, whether it was a major family break, a death of the immediate family, or an expulsion from the family home. Thus, for Malik, it is the conjunction of the father's death and poverty that makes him leave. As for Felipe, his mother also died and he was entrusted to his aunt rather than to his unemployed father, who was responsible for his half-brothers.

The question of schooling is not insignificant for these young people who have come to France to seek a future that they did not think they could achieve in their countries of origin. The question of work, and schoolwork as a step towards gainful employment and a factor of autonomy, is preponderant in their comments. In this sense, we could speak of them as "minor aspirants" (Etiemble and Zanna, 2012): they want another life than the one provided by their initial framework to achieve greater personal fulfillment.

Malik is a revealing example of a break in the relationship with the knowledge that contributes to personal development. Illiterate at the time he arrived in France, he learned to read and write at the age of 16, which seems particularly arduous but rewarding:

> "I'm proud because it's not easy to learn French and to read and write and I'm 16 so it's not easy to learn but I still manage to progress and I continue to work every evening so that's good afterward at the CFA".

At the time of the interview, Malik had started an apprenticeship in the kitchen and was working in a three-star restaurant*: "very nice chef explain to him well but only say explain once after you have to do you have to dod it alone I take responsibility it's important I work in the kitchen".*

Here, after two years in France, there is a significant shift from an illiterate peasant to a luxury restaurant apprentice (who will later become a chef), for a young man who never had enough to eat in his childhood and knew only Mali's cuisine when arriving in France.

Felipe has a different relationship with the school, for having experienced extensive schooling in Guinea, speaks several languages, and arrived in France with a good level of education.

For him, the break was not fundamentally in the school system, of which he already had experience, but rather in his conception of the place of the student in society. Thus, in the course of his interview, Felipe returned several times to his living conditions and the incomprehension they generated in him:

> "there's the association that looked for accommodation for us in a village (…) yes, for the moment it's better than where we were at G*… it's not the same because at G* it was really very, very difficult conditions… very difficult… and now I'm in a house… with lodgers…".

If Felipe and Malik could represent the two extremes of the relationship to the school project, Martinez is rather in between, having been schooled until the fifth grade in the Ivory Coast and reporting a project that changes as his confrontation with the Real changes.

As we can see here, the child's plan to be a policeman like in the TV series, confronted with the reality of the disappearance of support and economic necessity, initially becomes the declared desire to "*do a little training",* an expression that allows us to hear the desire not to be in school for very long to be able to be in a salaried work situation as soon as possible. But this project seems to change at the time of the interview, when this discourse of schooling outside of any professional project appears, to *"deepen my knowledge a little mo*re", which could be read as a desire for education in the broad sense.

But France does not respect its obligations in terms of schooling for foreign minors, and the conditions of reception at school in France for these young people are far from being as ideal as the texts of the law provide. In particular, the need to be enrolled in vocational training to be able to claim a residence permit when they reach the age of majority is a significant obstacle

to the desire to be educated and to the freedom to choose a vocational or educational path.

Beyond these issues, it is schooling and access to education as a process of identity construction that is of interest here. Malik is less proud of his entry into learning than of his success in reading and of the kind look, his boss gives him, of the confidence he expresses in him. As opposed perhaps to yesterday, Malik seems to feel like a subject of whom he is proud.

The feeling is very different from Felipe's speech. Perhaps he expected recognition of his academic merit equal to the one he received in Guinea, where it required many sacrifices from his mother. He is no more an exceptional student, but a student who hasn't the choice of orientation.

Each of these ruptures is made up of real events experienced by adolescents psychologically. The strength of the emotions aroused by the ruptures linked to the mourning engages the subject in cleavages between the before and after of the migration generating in their turn an ego-remodeling as an effect of defense mechanism.

Migration makes a rupture at the same time as it is a rupture. Whether it is forced by circumstances or the family, or whether it is taken singularly and/or impulsively, it has as its corollary the responsibilities of the adult. On the way and the territory of arrival, no one will take charge of the young person who must assume his or her destiny, as an adult.

At a second perhaps deeper level, a form of rupture is born of the confrontation with reality, that of the difficulty of the journey, and that of the reception conditions in the country or countries of arrival. Felipe confessed his disenchantment: *"In Africa, when you hear about France and everything in Europe… you can't imagine that once you arrive in France you will encounter the difficulties we did".*

Because leaving a familiar home to arrive in a global unknown creates a break in identity, especially for a teenager:

> "This extraction, a real rupture, is potentially depersonalizing because it disconnects the subject from his cultural mesh and his symbolic references, from what represents him as a subject. There is no longer a cultural and relational signifier, there is no longer the 'work of culture' that inscribes the subject in a network of identifications that carries his or her own identity and makes sense of it." (Thibaudeau, 2006, paragraph 8)

5.2 Reorientation

At one level, this reorientation is due to migration, which leads to a new destiny in the French social and economic context.

For example, Felipe and Malik are going into the vocational field when Martinez is not at school yet. The destiny of each of them can only be combined with the French context, namely the condition of being taken into care by the State institute for children and the shift towards the vocational route.

This reorientation commits these young men to a certain place in French society, that of the proletariat. For Malik, who did not go to school in Africa, it is a form of social ascension, for Felipe or Martinez, the social shift within the classes is more difficult to define. The death of the mother marks the end of studies in Africa and migration is also a possibility to resume schooling.

At another level, each person experiences adolescence as a time of physical and psychological maturation. It would have taken place in Africa, of course, but differently, because the psychic reorganization did not take place under the same conditions: with a distant family, with cultural references to be forgotten and others to be learned.

For example, Felipe discovered the profession of refrigeration engineer in Africa, took a professional diploma in air conditioning in France, and wants to continue in this field, "*because I am in the cold business… I want to continue in this field", "because I am in the cold business": "well, the cold is essential/it protects?/that's it".* Would this "*cold"* signifier between Africa and France be the mark of a link and also of a defense? Is it necessary to be cold in the ordeal of migration? Felipe's slow and controlled tone is noted in both interviews. He is in control, holding back and thinking about starting a family:

> "ah yes ah I'll have children" and they will be able to enjoy the framework of life[…] if God wills they will be they will not be born in Africa they will be born (smile) in Europe so […] changes everything ".

Malik talks about the place of women, which he finds different here:

> "I found it good to have equality between men and women, all the same, you know, not men deciding and women obeying, but everyone deciding together, I find that good, but still, I can carry things, you know, at home".

The place of gender and sex is also questioned by Felipe: *"I can't imagine my daughter doing football, I'd say she'd study to be a lawyer, you know, things like that […] if the boy wants to do football, he'll be happy to do sports".*

We can also return to the signifier "*France"* and how it conveys in each of them an Imaginary and a Symbolic that brings these young people to France. Felipe speaks of *"great thinkers"*, "*democracy"*, and "*potentialities*". Martinez also aspires to France, his dream country. Malik, who did not go to school, does not mention this in the interview.

French soft power and French colonialist past in Africa would therefore not be foreign to the adolescent reorientations within the psyche of certain UAMs.

However, we know little about how adolescent psychic reorganization is influenced by this migration. Ottino and Ottino (2001) point out that the "*adolescent process [is] itself too often neglected"* when talking about UAMs in favor of the migration issue, which we have reproduced here a priori.

5.3 Place of the denial of identity in the systemic racist mechanics of the (non) consideration of young UAM

Beyond the ruptures and reorientations experienced by young UAMs during their migratory journey, which could be inherent to any of the migratory journeys of young people, for example, those migrating with their families, the analysis shows that the oppression of the UAMs is specific. We speak here of the effects of state policy as a systemic position. Thus, what characterizes the French position towards UAMs, from the point of view of legal discourse, is based on several key points, the first of which is the relationship to the identity of the young person. Thus, the first response of the State to the young people's request for assistance is to contest their minority, i.e. their identity: to assert that the young person's papers are false, and say that he or she is not a child, knowing that his or her minority will be recognized later since this is the case in nearly 80% of cases (CGT ANRAS, 2017).

As we have seen above, young people's expectations of France are very high, fed by the discourse of the ex-colonizing power propagated in the country of origin. The higher the expectations, the greater the disappointment, and we can therefore assume that the attitude of rejection of France, embodied in administrative difficulties that create situations of extreme vulnerability for young people, creates fundamental identity ruptures that force a subjective repositioning that makes a break and requires a reorientation that is not self-evident.

The systemic analysis opens the way to reflection. Indeed, it is not a question of refusing entry to the territory or validating it, but of validating after the fact an authorization to stay that was initially refused, and that may be withdrawn later when the young person comes of age, if he or she has not conformed to institutional expectations, i.e. has refused to be what was expected of them.

There is here a specific procedure of denial of identity, which is affirmed both at the legal and the singular level and which cannot be only an effect of chance. A state is a state, and we assume that a state does not act randomly: we, therefore, make the hypothesis that the legal process at stake with UAMs has an objective, a meaning. We assume that this policy is part of a deliberate

weakening of a population that could well represent a new stage in the history of immigration in France.

5.4 Place of the denial of the ability to choose a future

Since we are focusing here on the processes of transition concerning young UAMs, we are specifically interested in the question of the career path as a factor of subjectification and a symbolic transition from childhood to adulthood. In no life is the choice of a career path trivial: it is, all the more so in the case of adolescents, an orientation that marks one's destiny and makes sense in a life course. As far as the UAMs are concerned, the question of a professional orientation is particular: indeed, as we have seen with Felipe, Martinez, and Malik, this professional orientation is not a choice for the UAMs. It is not so much a question of asking what path the UAM wishes to choose in terms of his or her professional life, but rather of submitting (subjecting) him or her to a choice made by the institution because it potentially conditions the ability to remain on French territory. This institutional obligation, which requires at least six months of vocational training to be able to apply to stay in France, is coupled with an institutional refusal of schooling that is embodied in the denial of the minority. Thus, we can hypothesize that the State seems to participate in organizing the employment of a young workforce, subjugated by the fear of not obtaining official papers, which did not require a long-term investment during its youth, and which can be forced to choose those occupations that are said to be "deficit", i.e., for which the local population is not sufficient to meet the needs.

The analysis here reveals a transitional process that takes place at a symbolic yet very pragmatic level and that leads UAMs to move from the position of young people making adult decisions (such as leaving their country and family) to that of adults denied the right to make decisions about themselves (such as choosing a profession).

6 Conclusion

Many unaccompanied adolescents are part of today's migratory movements. Their excessively perilous journey at a time in their lives – adolescence – which is also difficult, led us to ask questions based on a collective in Toulouse and the meeting of three migrants. This work corroborates the major impact of French administrative rules on the choice of professional orienta-

tion (Santoianni, 2016; Carayon et al., 2021) and intimate questioning takes less space, whether it is linked to adolescence or traumas potentially linked to migration (Denicola and Leconte, 2016; Palazzi and Idir, 20). We wanted to emphasize in particular the postcolonial dimension at work in this forced adolescence

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A Tri-Menu Model of Learning to support young refugees' Cultural Wellbeing in Australia

Karin Louise

1 Introduction

On the surface, young Refugees[1] arriving in Australia have the promise of egalitarian education and plentiful work opportunities. However, the lived experiences of 78 Refugee young people (15-25 years) from the Navigating Resettlement research project from 2016 to 2017 in Western Sydney Australia tell a different story. Young Refugees from this project were predominantly from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Sudan and South Sudan. SydWest youth workers noticed a reluctance of young Refugees to enroll in school and attend regularly. Another significant issue was that Refugees had difficulty finding suitable employment, which sometimes forced them into unprotected or illegal work situations. The findings revealed that young people had feelings of being misunderstood, isolated and disempowered, which they felt impacted on their educational and life aspirations. This raised questions about how their educational needs were being addressed in school based educational programs and how wellbeing needs were being included in Refugee education programs.

Although Australia is a multicultural country with one in three people born overseas, Refugee educational policy is firmly entrenched in monolithic English language acquisition programs (Adoniou 2018). Primarily focusing on English acquisition effectively sidelines diverse cultural knowledge systems resulting in a cascade of marginalization effects that impact on the wellbeing needs of young Refugees (Bansel et al 2016, Miller et al. 2018, Hayward 2019, French and Armitage 2020). Strength-based approaches can mitigate feelings of isolation and instill confidence through building upon young people's existing skills combined with whole person wellbeing approaches (Miller et al. 2018, Hayward 2019, Symons and Ponzio 2019, Shergold 2021). However, some scholars suggest that more culturally responsive pedagogies are needed within schools (Cerna, 2019) and others advocate for wrap around community-based services (Symonds and Ponzio 2019, Ammar et al 2021). Consequently, there is a growing consensus that more equitable

1 This word was capitalized out of respect.

and responsive approaches to the global neoliberal complexes that affect Refugee youth wellbeing is needed (Riddle 2018).

In response, this paper will present an educational intervention called the Tri-Menu Model of Learning (TMM) that emerged during the Navigating Resettlement Project (NR) in Western Sydney Australia. A brief background on the current approach to Refugee education in Australia is presented followed by an argument for Cultural Wellbeing approaches. The next section discusses 1) The Menu Model 2) Relational literacy and Cultural Wellbeing 3) Pluriversal creative spaces and safe risks. The discussion of the TMM as a pluriversal space for wellbeing will follow, concluding with implications for the social, cultural and creative needs of young Refugees during resettlement.

1.1 Monocultures in Australian refugee education

Australia is a nation of diverse cultures and languages with 30% of the population born overseas (ABS 2019). Although Australia's Refugee intake is small in comparison the rest of the world, 55% of its humanitarian entrants in 2016 were young people under 25 years. During this period, Refugees arrivals primarily came from Iraq, Syria, Burma, Afghanistan and Iran (Mackay 2018). Despite this diversity, Australia's educational policy for Refugees remains focused upon monoculturalism and the acquisition of English rather than a wholistic approach that integrates home languages and cultures into learning environments.

English acquisition programs within Australian schools have been criticized for routinely placing young Refugees in English as an Additional Language or Dialect classes (EAL/D) without due consideration of a student's prior educational experiences. This has led to EAL/D classes being perceived as places for students with a "diagnosis of disability" rather than places that value multiple languages (Baak and Miller 2109, French and Armitage 2020). According to Liddicoat and Crichton (2008), EAL/D classes rely too heavily on remediation, which runs counter to the initial intention of being sites of plural knowledge systems, with some scholars arguing such practices are a "racialization of disability" that perpetuates disadvantage through low expectations (Ko and Bal 2019).

Critically, French and Armitage (2020) argue that Australia's monocultural educational policy limits the repertoire of learners to monolithic mindsets because school curriculums largely frame home languages as irrelevant. Monocultural settlement approaches downplay the value of learning through cultural exchange and dismisses social and literacy benefits of plural pedagogies such as creative and cultural expression like visual art and music experiences (Veronis et al 2018). Implications for educators of Refugee youth

are that new educational models are needed to better cater for diverse learners who speak multiple languages, have uneven educational experiences, such as lived experiences of displacement, because this has significant impacts on cultural wellbeing.

Other educational support programs for newly arrived young Refugees of school age (15-18 years), provide some help for refugees, however these can be inconsistent due to precarious funding (Miller et al. 2018) or are only available at limited locations such as in city areas. For example, after school home-work centres are offered at schools with high Refugee student numbers to provide extra support but are often supervised by non-specialist teachers exhausted by their already overcrammed workload (Watkins, Noble and Wong 2018, Symmonds and Ponzio 2019). Consequently, while home-work centres offer much needed resources, such as computers and space for young Refugees to complete extracurricular tasks, dedicated tuition is not evenly available.

English language acquisition is essential for young Refugees to navigate Australian cultural life, however limited attention has been given to including wellbeing in educational design. Refugees must reorient themselves to a new life and culture which entails more than acquiring language proficiency. What is often underestimated is that young Refugee's must also navigate social emotional worlds within the cultural norms of the new environment (Cerna 2019, Smith et al 2021). Navigating the local cultural landscape can be overwhelming, heighten anxiety and lead to cascading impacts on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing (Mackay et al 2018, Mackay 2019, O'Donnell et al 2020). Alternative approaches that foster more nuanced, equitable and Cultural Wellbeing approaches to Refugee student learning are therefore needed.

2 Methodology

Young Refugees and migrants must navigate complex cultural and bureaucratic inter-plays between leaving their home country and transitioning to life in Australia. This often includes racism and discrimination, inner dislocation of loneliness and compounding everyday challenges that have significant impact on mental health (Mackay 2014, 2019, Cerna, 2019, Faulkner et al. 2019). Strong identification with cultural identity and heritage has been shown to be a protective factor that can help individuals and communities successfully negotiate challenges, adversities and inequities at times of crises (Hayward 2019, Oppedal et al. 2020). Cultural Wellbeing has been recognised as vital to community health and social cohesion (Dalziel et al 2019, Mackay 2014, 2019, Dalziel et al 2019). It is therefore important to use

methodologies that include complex and intersectional ways to investigate culture and wellbeing to work ethically with young Refugees.

In this project, Cultural Wellbeing was defined as the interplay of structural, relational and place-based impacts on wellbeing, including freedom of cultural expression and cultural connectedness (Mackay 2014, 2019). The Cultural Wellbeing Model (CWM) was used to investigate the complex cultural dislocations entangled in the process of re-orienting the self during transitional life experiences. The CWM has been informed by transversality theory that considers what occurs at the threshold of global border crossings and how lived assemblages form and are experienced (Bartlett & Vavrus 2014). Similarly, the CWM considers how the lived experience of wellbeing comes together, breaks apart and intersects at a particular time and place.

The CWM used in this research was underpinned by five areas of lived experience that influence Refugee wellbeing (Joyce & Liamputtong 2017, Moustakim & Mackay 2018, Mackay et al 2018, Mackay 2019). These were 1. Shared experiences, such as being displaced, labelled as a Refugee and the journeys taken to get to the new country 2. Transformational processes, such as the actions, modes of thinking and being that needed to change when learning the cultural norms of a new place 3. Creative cultural practices, such as rituals, traditions, language, arts, and heritage that were important in maintaining sense of cultural identity 4. Environment, such as the ecology of people and place that needed to be navigated 5. Values and belonging, such as experiences that provided acceptance or tension in becoming part of a community. These five elements were important in framing the research design and analysis through prompting questions like how are young Refugees perceived in the Australian community? How are educational and wellbeing needs met? What cultural factors assist displaced people in transition? What interventions can support educational aspirations?

Relational and ecological approaches, like the CWM, are needed when working with young Refugees as they capture the cultural reality of their lived experience (d'Abreu, Castro-Olivo & Ura 2019). The CWM theorized the effects of intersections between shared experience, belonging, creative cultural practices, place and transformational process that have been found to influence wellbeing and so was used to frame and analyse the research (Mackay 2014, 2019).

2.1 Method and data analysis

In March 2016, SydWest Multicultural Services (SydWest), Blacktown Australia commissioned Western Sydney University Researchers in the School of Education (WSU) to design a yearlong intervention to support the education-

al and employment aspirations of young Refugees using their service. The project involved 119 participants, comprising 78 Refugees from diverse backgrounds between the ages of 9 and 25 years, 8 youth workers, 12 pre-service teachers and 16 university academics. A program of weekly study and creative media design sessions were held between 4pm and 6pm on Monday afternoons during school terms from September 2016 to July 2017. The sessions were facilitated by WSU researchers, and SydWest youth workers with mentoring support from pre-service teachers. Within this structure a mix of research methods, including participatory arts-based methods, ethnographic immersion, interviews, focus groups and surveys were employed.

Engaging young Refugees and migrants during their early transition to Australia using more established research approaches, such as surveys and formal interviews, is fraught with challenges, in part due to the diversity of pre-arrival experiences and the variety of educational and language literacies (Bansel et al. 2016). Research involving newly arrived Refugees and migrants should utilise more participatory approaches and establish trust between researchers, Refugee communities and community organizations, as this is critical to successful, engaged ethical research. Participatory action research (PAR) methods using an arts-based methodology were used to value young people's cultural reality (Kemmis 2009). PAR privileges emancipatory, ongoing and multilayered dialogue with and between participants to inform the direction of the research intervention.

A strengths-based PAR was important in the research as it sought to build on young people's previous experiences and creative agency rather than the usual deficit discourse that downplays their capabilities (Norton & Sliep 2018). The project aimed to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' Refugee and migrant communities as young people were seen as bringing a range of skills, language capability and lived experiences that were valued (Bansel et al. 2016). ABR data was gathered using a mosaic of mixed methods in the form of paintings, artefacts and images that emerged from the weekly sessions with 78 young people from 10 ethnic backgrounds about their educational aspirations. The mixed mosaic methods such as talking, making and walking combined with ethnographic immersion enable a richer understanding of young people's lives than if only one method was employed (Barley & Russell 2019). Additionally, recorded semi structured interviews were conducted with 25 young people about past, present and future aspirations. Informal dialogues that occurred during the weekly sessions were an important part of the data captured in written ethnographic reflective observations.

The immersive ethnographic reflections and iterative dialogue with young people were part of the action research cycle of planning, action, analysis, reflection (Kemmis 2009). Therefore, data analysis was ongoing through conversations with participants and suggestions integrated into weekly sessions, where further analysis and action were then precipitated. Work-

ing with young Refugees in a participatory way provided a creative agency to counter Refugee status enabling an empowering enactment legitimizing their ideas (Clini, Thompson & Chatterji 2019). The ongoing data analysis led to the creation of three spaces, a study centre, a media design space and a creative dialogical space.

3 Findings: The Tri-Menu Model of Learning

The result of working with young Refugees and responding to their cultural and educational needs was the emergence of three learning spaces each focusing on an area of need and interest to young people called the Tri-Menu Model (TMM).

The three interrelated activity areas were

1. Study Centre
2. Web Design
3. Creative Space

The TMM provided choice between three learning spaces in one room so young people could move freely between spaces. The study space was supported by pre-service teacher mentors who assisted young people with school tasks and assignments. The web-design space included ten new computers and a dedicated media studies teacher working on a Refugee focused web design project. The creative space was added when young people requested painting, drawing and a free-thinking idea space.

The research found a menu of choice model worked to engage young Refugees in their learning better than a traditional homework centre space at SydWest. When the TMM was introduced, attendance of young people increased 60% from 2 regular attendees per week to an average of 12 regular attendees per week with some weeks up to 18 young people per session. Increased attendance may be attributed in part to new laptop computers and ipads that replaced outdated technology. However, upon detailed ethnographic analysis guided by the CWM, researchers found three prominent themes emerged. These will be discussed in the following section.

3.1 The Tri-Menu Model: Structure, consistency, choice

The three menu options provided structure, consistent support, and choice with the option to move between activities and spaces. Initially only home-

work help and media design spaces were available, however, in response to young Refugees' request for more creative activities, a third space was added. The triangulation of movement between more academically oriented tutoring, media centre and a creative space acted as a circuit breaker from the cognitive load on young people and the demands from school, family and pursuing their own aspirations. Including more creative tasks such as painting, drawing, creative writing and experimental arts meant that young people were free to explore, take risks, play and have naturalistic conversations with peers or researchers.

The choice to move from activity to activity meant that young people took control of learning through making critical judgements and decisions about their own actions. Young people might choose to attend the sessions for study help but then move on through to the web design or creative space. Alternatively, they might begin with creative work and then ask for assistance completing homework. The TMM differed to more formal learning spaces that used power over learners to that of co-facilitated spaces. The TMM was a more fluid ecology of learning that encouraged creative agency through listening to needs and acting upon these. One young participant reflected upon the choice and safe and flexible spaces that were created

> I have been coming to the Navigating Resettlement program since it started in August 2016. I have participated in visiting the university, mentoring, the study space, the artworks and a little bit of the web skills workshop. I like coming here because I get to talk and chill, it is safe and friendly. I can make art if I feel like it and get to practice my homework. I am very interested in soccer, but I also like to paint and draw. I'm interested in going to TAFE. In the future I want to be a soccer player or an Architect.

While flexibility to choose was important so too was the provision of structure and consistency in the sessions. Damşa, Nerland & Andreadakis (2019) propose that learning is a result of relational, emergent practices that occur within ecological networks. While emergent learning practices require flexibility, they also require the framing conditions that support learning. Providing three distinct activity spaces in the same large room, signaled that young people were agents in their own learning and could choose to engage with the purpose and expectations of each space. The structure and consistency of the weekly sessions held at the same time during school terms enabled safety and engendered trust in the researchers and the program.

3.2 Relational literacy and Cultural Wellbeing

The TMM created an environment where young people could learn and socialise through being together, creating shared meaning through translanguaging. Translanguaging pedagogy incorporates multilingual ways of teaching and learning using relational semiotic systems (Barros et al 2020). Such practices are important for Refugee young people and their families explained by one participant who said

> I speak Dari, Urdu and English, though my Urdu is not as good as my English…..It took four years to get here to join my parents in Australia, mainly because they did not speak English and found the visa application process incomprehensible. My mum said, ‘When you don’t know a language spoken in a foreign country, you might as well be deaf’. I want to become an immigration lawyer….I don’t want other people to have to face the same challenges as my parents did.

Transitioning to a new place and culture for the young Refugees and asylum seekers can be a complicated process, considering the trauma and distress associated with war and displacement. This can often manifest in a sense that they do not fully belong in their new country. Moon and Lee (2020) suggests that “no interior cognitive capacity is alone responsible for learning” and that individualistic human agency in learning is overstated. Instead, Ferrara and Ferrari (2017) highlight the role of “distributed agency” where the learning is a process of becoming within continuously modulated assemblages. Focusing on young people’s educational and life aspirations, such as by asking them questions about what was important to them, sparked informal conversations between teachers, facilitators, youth workers and young people that provided important opportunities for learning about each other’s lives, cultures and wellbeing.

The TMM encompassed spoken, written, digital and relational literacies that purposefully encouraged students to integrate their diverse and emerging use of literacies through relationships with others and relationships between the three different learning spaces. These relational “being with” approaches to teaching and learning were powerful ways of opening new perspectives and possibilities of being (Zapata et al 2019). The improvised movement between the learning activities created liminal relational spaces where language, social and relational literacy could be developed. While shared experiences were specifically planned for through the implementation of the CWM, the ways in which relationships manifested were contingent on participant improvisation during the sessions. Therefore, creating spaces to make the connection with people are valuable means of sustaining cultural affiliations and wellbeing (Irwin et al. 1999, Mackay 2019).

3.3 Pluriversal creative spaces and safe risks

In each session young Refugees were invited to paint on three doors to depict their past lives, current circumstances and future aspirations, which prompted conversations about intergenerational wellbeing and multiple pathways towards aspirations. The TMM creative spaces were pluriversal in that they provided multiple ways of seeing the world and expressing the self that did not rely upon monolingual or uni-semiotic encounters (Perry 2020). Pluriversal open ended ways of thinking and learning such as the creative space in the TMM are critical for young Refugees as they create rhizomic pathways for life choices that may not have been thought previously possible (Perry 2021). The digital storytelling aspect of the program meant that young people had a space to create agentic narratives which could challenge deficit discourses on who they were and legitimize their own lived experiences. When young Refugees were given an opportunity to express themselves creatively it prompted dialogic and imaginative spaces with others and hopeful thoughts became real options. One female participant said

> I like how there is no right or wrong answer and you can have your own opinion about things. Iran was an Islamic Republic and there is never that much freedom there…You get more of an opportunity to voice what has been wrong against you …Right now I think I want to pursue law because I think I am good at seeing things from different points of view. I think too many people are obsessed with money and consuming, especially big business, presidents and the like.

Affective and creative pedagogical strategies, like the creative space, are vital in Refugee education as they validate multiple ways of knowing (Semetsky 2007, Perry 2020). The creative space provided a place for young people to unfold, grow, change their mind and offered an alternative to monolithic educational approaches such as employment workshops that offered a resume writing and goal setting. Didactic approaches to employment and educational support programs limit young Refugees exploration of aspirations and opportunities to see themselves differently to narrowly defined expectations. Young people were more likely to voice their dreams and desires when creative painting, media design activities than when completing homework in the study space. It was here that the reality of young people's lives was shared, and vulnerabilities expressed. The more informal creative space encouraged safe risks to try out new ideas through dialogue, drawing and painting. In turn, trust and support was created through participant configuration of the design of processes (Bustamante Duarte et al 2021). Mutual relationships based on trust and respect developed confidence in student driven choices through trial and error, while expressing hopes and fears to non-judgmental others opened future educational possibilities.

4 Discussion

Young people in Australian schools are aware that what they are learning may not provide them with what they need to survive and flourish in a complex neoliberal world (Riddle 2018). The TMM was a response to the educational and wellbeing needs of Refugee young people in a complex world that moved beyond functional literacy approaches to responsive democratic learning spaces. Riddle, Heffernan and Bright (2022) argue that current neoliberal and standardized curriculums are individualistically competitive which damages young people's wellbeing. To ignore this new world young people are navigating is an act of "epistemic violence" (Perry 2020). Perry argues that new models of learning are needed to validate diverse literacies, other modes of engagement and being in the world. The TMM aimed to provide flexible and safe spaces that were purposefully designed so content could change in the three menu spaces, dependent on the young people's needs. Central to the TMM was listening to and then incorporating the diverse voices of young Refugees through responsive ecologies of learning.

Australian Refugee educational programs need to better integrate the full range of learning experiences that impact on of young Refugee cultural wellbeing. Despite the policy focus on English language acquisition programs, non-school completions were more related to discrimination experienced at school that made young people feel like they did not belong, rather than English language acquisition (Correa-Velez et al 2016). The compounding effects of resettlement have significant impacts on student wellbeing and can result in marginalization or withdrawal from active engagement in education and other life activities potentially leading to anti-social attitudes and behaviour (Mansouri & Wood, 2008).

The increasingly volatile state of the political, cultural and natural systems requires a sensitivity to the affect environment of young learners (Perry 2020). Therefore, the Cultural Wellbeing Model was important in creating the environment where young Refugees could enact agency to remake cultural identities and reimagine possible futures. Employing the CWM provided a focus on wellbeing needs of Refugee young people that meant difficult to talk about topics were unearthed such as trauma from war, separation from family, issues at school and hopes for the future. Through simple but powerful shared experiences, pluriversal spaces were made and remade that disambiguated what was thought to be known and transformed this into new fragments of knowing and being.

The TMM provided flexibility for facilitators to swap in appropriate activities in 'click in, click out' spaces. The research design meant that three distinct, but interconnected pluriversal assemblages, came into being, broke apart and were remade by whomever was in attendance on the day and de-

pendent on the life experiences bought to the communal space. The menu spaces included digital storytelling, interactive games and art making in translanguaging practices (Symons and Gajasinghe 2022) that improved multimodal language acquisition and helped students to see the world differently. Perry (2020) suggests relational and pluriversal literacies are critical in language acquisition programs as they provide ways to move beyond normalised but ineffective pedagogies. Pluriversal pedagogies decentre hierarchies of knowing and open multiple pathways to learning that do not focus on only one way to learn, to participate in education or to find meaningful paid employment.

Nonlinear models that allow for complexity are particularly important for young Refugees as these better reflect the messy complexity and uncomfortableness of becoming that occurs in transitional educational contexts (Mulcahy 2018, Gravett 2019). The TMM encapsulated a non-linear emergence of young Refugees becoming through shared rhizomic learning spaces and in so doing, created multiple pathways for learning rather than limiting young Refugees to one language, one way to learn or to one career. TMM interrelated spaces operated as portals that were left ajar so that teacher control of the learning process was suspended enough to allow rich liminal spaces for young Refugees to make new shared meanings of who they could become in their new country and imagine future selves such as lawyers, doctors, musicians, soccer players or media specialists.

Refugee education must include a more holistic approach to learning that includes agentic spaces to explore life experiences, past, present and future. The success of the TMM and the decline of the SydWest homework centre demonstrated that functional approaches to literacy learning were not as engaging for young people as these did not include ways to explore their multiple interests and broader aspirations. The three spaces in the TMM provided opportunities for young Refugees to have their cultural histories acknowledged but also to voice future desires. Apart from creating social pluriversal literacy spaces with other young people from a range of backgrounds and language abilities, the TMM was a space where their experiences, dreams and desires were legitimized as important. Young Refugees did not need to limit their aspirations to 'getting a job' but reflected on their own needs, strengths and desires and take steps to navigate towards these.

5 Conclusion

Young Refugees have diverse needs, so a one size fits all program approach is unlikely to be supportive of the many strengths they already have. Learning about and through a new culture is highly dependent on the social con-

nections that are available, so policy makers and educationalists need to ensure Refugee support programs are proactive in creating rich and interesting social spaces that foster multiple literacies. The TMM was a pluriverse of hybrid creative cultural practices and literacy pedagogies that created an environment where young Refugees had control over their own learning choices and freedom to explore emerging aspirations. The TMM demonstrated that social and cultural aspects were vital to include in learning programs as they provided multifunctioning spaces of becoming and allowed young people to experiment in the remaking of their cultural identities that made possible futures that were not previously open to them.

The TMM can be used to re-frame pedagogy and curriculum design, teacher education and resettlement programs that are more suited to the needs of adolescent Refugees. Young Refugees have very high ambitions to succeed but what has been missing in Australian resettlement programs is a practical pedagogical design that is interesting for young Refugees and workable for teachers and support workers. The TMM provided deep insight into what young Refugees needed in terms of their educational aspirations and what might support them to pursue these. Learning was enhanced through three integrated but distinct spaces suggesting that withdrawing young Refugees in EAL/D classes may not be sufficient and may create unintentional inequality. Rather than exclusively focusing on literacy acquisition, the TMM clearly demonstrates the need for more fit for purpose educational models that account for social and cultural wellbeing.

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A peer education program for adolescent girls in refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Coping with transitions

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1 Introduction

This chapter reports educational research undertaken in two refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The study focused on adolescent girls whose education has been disrupted through departing Syria and living a new life as refugees. The girls had experienced ruptures to their lives: moving across a border (geographical transition), changing from their 'home' lifestyle to life in tents in refugee camps, separation from friends and family (social transition), and changes to the education on offer (educational transition). In addition, they were dealing with numerous other social issues, including abuse, harassment, restrictions on freedom of movement and choices, early marriage and health matters (social transition). They were also growing up–developing into young women (developmental transition), a process that interacts with cultural traditions and expectations, such as marriage.

The adolescent girls had come from Syria. March 2011 saw the beginning of demonstrations against President Bashar Al-Assad, marking the start of civil war (Tyyska et al. 2017). This was inspired by the Arab Spring, and was a reflection of resentment from unemployment, corruption and an absence of political freedom (Wieland 2012). The Syrian government's attempt to end the protests by force caused further eruptions, including ongoing civil war, the division of ethnic and religious sects, and the involvement of foreign powers (BBC 2018). Indeed, 55% of the Syrian population has been displaced, with 5.7 million refugees, 6.2 million Internally Displaced People, and 13 million people requiring humanitarian assistance (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2019), making Syrians the second largest refugee population in the world (Culbertson & Constant 2015). Many who fled Syria as refugees resorted to safer havens in Turkey, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. In 2022, 11 years later, the refugee camps in these regions are still occupied by Syrian refugees.

The duration of such transitions is unknown and can last decades (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center 2021). In addition, the challenges

encountered along the way, such as trauma, loss of loved ones, poor health, poverty and unemployment, have been found to make life mentally and physically difficult (Adey et al. 2020; Kabranian-Melkonian 2015). Indeed, vast humanitarian implications stem from refugee crises, as refugees are vulnerable and they require shelter, water, medical care, food and other services (Adey et al. 2020; Braithwaite et al. 2019). Dealing with the conditions in refugee camps involves transitions, particularly in terms of geographical dislocation and different social conditions, and these often create further vulnerabilities (Leaning 2001). Child marriage has been identified as a significant issue among Syrian adolescent girls after displacement (Chakraborty 2019; El Arab & Sagbakken 2019; Mourtada et al. 2017). Some families want to preserve their daughters' honour and family reputation; others see marriage as a solution for financial and food stability (Chakraborty 2019) and as a response to extreme life circumstances (Høvring 2019). Girls in young marriages are more prone to face domestic violence (Chakraborty 2019), exploitation, and psychological pain as they feel isolation and distance from family and friends (Karasapan & Shah 2019). These are but some of the social transitions that occur.

Other predicaments relate to legal documents, including school certificates and degrees (Karasapan & Shah 2019), and these are part of the educational transitions of young people. For many refugee youth, continuing their formal education is difficult, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR] 2021) reporting that only 48% of refugee youth attend school. Even though schools are situated within the refugee camps, education for young people is often compromised. Not only do schools have problems, such as poor resourcing in terms of teachers and facilities, but other more urgent factors, including food and shelter, often impact on the take-up of schooling (Ahmed 2021; Celik 2020; Rashid et al. 2019; Zebari et al. 2020). The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF] (2015, 2019) has reported some of the challenges, emphasising that "quality of learning for children was a pressing concern" (UNICEF 2019, p. 3). Although Celik (2020) pointed out that school can provide a normality for life in the camp, it is often "very difficult to adapt to school, class, teachers and friends" and to have academic expectations (p. 84) when refugee life is full of transition, challenging experiences and trauma.

Indeed, it is recognised that life in refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region is "very hard and the education is not good enough" (Begikhani 2020, p. 292). It is therefore critical that education in refugee contexts ensures that young people build skills to be resilient in the face of the various transitions they encounter, at least as a first step for surviving camp life. Although there is a growing body of research about refugee education, it generally focuses on education in locations where refugees have settled permanently, rather than in refugee camps which are meant to provide temporary accommodation

for those who have fled from their conflicted place of residence (Braithwaite et al. 2019).

The adolescent girls in this study could attend school in the refugee camps, although their experiences there were not always happy or productive. However, a youth space in each camp offered a peer education program, which was generally one week of activities focused on developing personal and life skills. The program was conducted by peer educators, who had also been refugees and still lived in the camp. We were unable to find any previous research that investigated this program or programs like it in similar contexts. This chapter, therefore, intends to address the research gap at the intersection of refugee girls in camp settings and peer education.

In the literature, peer education is usually associated with formal educational institutions such as schools and colleges (Topping 1996), whereas the current study is different, because it examines peer education outside of formal schooling and in a humanitarian context. As explained by Topping (2005), peer education involves "people from similar social groups who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by doing so" (p. 631). Dryden-Peterson (2017) explained that refugee education is "for an unknowable future" (p. 14). She argued that education has an important role in "creating certainty and mending the disjunctures of … trajectories as refugees" (p. 16). These are important issues to consider in relation to the peer education program and its influence on the transitions in adolescents' lives.

The research we are reporting examined a peer education program funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and working with youth affected by the Syrian crisis in Iraq. The program targets adolescent youth to remain at school, have access to hygiene kits, empower them within their community, and protect their health and safety (UNFPA 2015). UNFPA aims to assist youth to make appropriate decisions related to sexual and reproductive health, while having the right awareness, with a particular emphasis on marginalised adolescent girls (UNFPA 2019). The ultimate aim is for youth to be able to ensure their own well-being and to rebuild their societies when crises abate. For working with adolescents in humanitarian and crisis situations, UNFPA (2005) has developed numerous training toolkits for those organising programs such as its peer education program. The UNFPA Iraq office has provided intensive peer education training and training of trainers to youth in Iraq since 2008, as well as manuals to guide the peer educators and the program (UNFPA 2005). The peer education program was, at the time this research was conducted (and still is), a major component of its activities for youth development, particularly with vulnerable populations such as refugees.

The research described in this chapter was conducted in two refugee camps located in two governorates of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: the

Kawrgosk refugee camp in Erbil and the Domiz refugee camp in Duhok. Erbil received refugees from Syria in what is known as the first wave in 2010, and a second wave arrived in 2013. The Kawrgosk refugee camp is approximately 30 km from the centre of the city of Erbil. The Duhok governorate is 155 km from Erbil, and is situated in the west, near Turkey and Syria. The Domiz refugee camp is 18 km outside the Duhok city centre.

The study focused on two iterations of the peer education program, one in each camp, during 2018 and 2019. The program aimed to develop young people's life and survival skills. It was generally conducted as a five-day program, but the participants could attend as many times as they liked. The research deliberately investigated programs for adolescent girls, even though the program was also conducted for adolescent boys. The research questions were: What type of education did the peer education program offer the refugee adolescent girls? How did the program operate, especially in relation to the range of transitions that the girls were experiencing?

2 This study

The study set out to examine the peer education program that was available for adolescent girls living in two refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and what types of knowledges and skills were being addressed. The program operated at the youth space in the camps, a space where ongoing activities and workshops for youth were held, including art classes, music, sports, zumba, and theatre.

Conceptually, we draw on Paul and Quiggin's (2020) discussion of transformative education. They argued that education involves epistemic change–"providing … new ways of looking at the world and teaching [students] to consider and criticize assumptions they had previously taken for granted" (p. 579)–along with personal change. Although Paul and Quiggin's work was focused on a different context from this study, they acknowledged that change can be "short-lived and intense" or longer and more sustained (p. 561), which seemed relevant to the way the peer education program operated, especially since it was offered as a short, one-week intervention. However, as already explained, the adolescent girls could attend the program as often as they liked.

The participants of this research were two distinct groups: the adolescent refugee girls, who attended the youth space and took part in peer education sessions, and peer educators, young women who worked directly with the adolescent girls. In total, there were 45 adolescent girls between 13 and 19 years old and five peer educators. All had fled Syria with their families and resided inside the refugee camps, thus holding refugee status. The adolescent

girls were of school age and were also attending the school located in the camp where they were residing. Participation in the peer education program and in the research project was voluntary.

The peer educators had similar backgrounds, having also arrived as adolescent refugees. They were still living within the refugee camp and had experienced the same transitions as the adolescent girls. The peer educators had previously participated in the program, and they had later been invited to join as peer educators. This meant that they were about three years older than the adolescent girls, but with very similar life experiences. Peer educators had received training and they were all provided with a copy of the UNFPA (2005) manual.

The data collection took place within the youth space inside the refugee camps. Data were collected through ethnographic techniques: semi-structured interviews (Barbour & Schostak 2005) with all of the research participants, observations of the peer education program they were either attending or conducting, informal conversations before, after and during the daily activities, and a field notes reflective journal (Creswell 2003). The interviews, which were conducted in Arabic and Kurdish, were conducted pre- and post-program and transcribed in English. As part of the data collection process, the first author spent time building trust with those attending or working in the youth spaces in the refugee camps to ensure research trustworthiness. This included participating in some of the activities and contributing snacks. Ethical clearance was obtained for the research (University of Southern Queensland, H18REA097).

Data analysis involved an inductive approach following the eight steps put forward by Creswell (2003): organising and preparing the data; reading through the data for general ideas, a coding process, notetaking, and then organising the data into sections before proceeding to interpret and bring meaning to the data at hand. In particular, we were interested in the characteristics of the program and how it worked transformatively (Freire 1993) to enable and empower the adolescent girls as they negotiated the challenges of life and transitions in the refugee camps. For this chapter, we draw on examples of transitions and how the program attempted to address them.

3 Findings

Although we did not deliberately set out to collect data about the schooling on offer in the two refugee camps, many of the adolescent girls talked about their dislike of school and drew comparisons with peer education. The peer educators said that schools did not cater for the adolescents and were disconnected from their everyday lives. In other words, the contextual factors that

impacted on the girls on a daily basis were not taken into consideration in the teaching at school. For example, the traumatic experiences of the adolescent girls and their backgrounds, stories and challenges seemed to be kept separate from their learning. The geographical, social and developmental transitions that the girls were experiencing were not the focus of the school education on offer.

3.1 Peer education in two refugee camps

In contrast, the peer education program was different from the more traditional and formal schooling that was available and, based on the program participants' interview responses, it was well received. Freire (1993) argued that most educational interventions fail because they are designed by outsiders based on their personal views of what reality is, rather than considering the views and experiences of those being targeted by the program. This was not the case for the peer education program conducted in the refugee camps. The program worked in flexible and responsive ways, where the overall focus was designed to address the transitions that took place in the lives of the adolescent girls, and their input during the program was taken into account. This meant that the program operated at the intersection of education and the transitions experienced by the adolescent girls. The peer educators demonstrated flexibility and sensitivity about program content, saying "We … adjust to what is relevant in the camp," and "I don't stick to the manual anymore." They used topics from the manual (e.g., addiction, puberty, early marriage), but they also included camp-specific issues (e.g., unsafe locations) and issues that had arisen in previous sessions (e.g., disagreements, anger, misunderstandings, media information). This showed they were sensitive to the girls' feelings, and they did not single out particular girls.

In an interview, one of the peer educators (PE) reflected on an issue that arose from the social transition in the adolescent girls' lives: early marriage, one of the matters that the program attempted to address.

> PE: You know most of the girls, they think about marriage. I don't know what it is about about marriage that is so …
>
> SM: So they like to get married?
>
> PE: Yes, they're year eight and they are getting married. And if you ask the family they say it is her wish. Okay I don't get what, why straight away marriage. You know girls, they are year nine, they came to me. They had failed maths and English. I tutored them. One of them said if I fail this time I won't go back to school. Okay, why won't you go back to school? Because I want to get married.

The peer educators explained that they aimed to allow the adolescent girls to think critically regarding certain decisions in their lives, without being told directly what to do or what not to do. One of the peer educators stated: “We help them make the healthier decision for themselves by showing them the consequences that could happen.”

Part of the reason that the peer education program was able to do that was because it was conducted by young women who had been refugees themselves and still resided in the refugee camps. These peer educators had personal experience of the types of experiences that may have been problematic to the adolescent girls, and they were trained to provide relevant and appropriate learning for the girls. In particular, the program addressed a range of transitions: social transition that included early marriage, social injustice, social stigma, addiction, violence, and sexual harassment; geographical transition, such as safety and security while commuting to different locations in the camp; developmental transition, including focusing on puberty, sexual and reproductive health, and mental well-being, such as anger management and coping with emotions; and educational transition, such as the importance of remaining at school. It was clear that the program was providing targeted education to assist the adolescent girls to live and survive in the camps and to cope with the transitions that were occurring.

Personal safety within the refugee camps, for example, was one of the focus topics, and it addressed the girls’ social transition into a new living environment. In one of the peer education sessions, one of the adolescent girls spoke about a family friend’s daughter who was lost in the camp. She explained that a man took the girl by the hand in the wrong direction, and “she knew he was not taking her the right way so she screamed, let go of his hand and ran away.” It was not surprising for safety to be a focus of the peer education program, because Syrian girl refugees elsewhere in the Middle East have been identified as targets of harassment, even within host communities (Bartels et al. 2020), as a result of their geographical transition to new countries and communities. As Bartels et al. explained, they were seen as vulnerable and without protection in places where “the security risks are perceived to be high” (p. 8).

In addition, among Syrian refugee women, considerable gender-based violence, including rape, has been reported (Çöl et al. 2020). The peer education program addressed topics such as communication, dealing with emotions, social problems and addiction. These were just a few of the issues that demonstrated the need for life skills and decision-making skills to help the adolescent girls cope with the transitions that were taking place in their lives after leaving their home countries.

In their interviews after the program, the adolescent girls were questioned about the influence of the program on their thinking. The following

excerpt from an interview with Lara (pseudonym) is fairly typical of the girls' responses.

> Lara: I changed my thoughts, and I learned about puberty, and … and I learned about early marriage.
>
> SM: What did you learn about early marriage?
>
> Lara: Early marriage is not good. …
>
> SM: So you don't think you will marry early?
>
> Lara: No, not until I become 20 years, 20 years and above. I don't want to get married. I don't like.

Lara's responses indicated that the program had encouraged discussion and thinking about social issues and developmental transitions. Some of the other girls reported that they felt more relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings, thus learning to cope with transitions. Dirin (pseuconym), for example, said: "To be honest, I was always angry, crying, and my mental well-being was zero, to be honest, just from stress, and I had missed Syria a lot, but I am more relaxed now. I am happier." According to one of the peer educators: "I felt that they [the adolescent girls] began to have a bit of hope."

3.2 How the program operated

The peer education sessions conducted in the refugee camps were participatory in nature. Even though the program did not talk about pedagogical approaches, it was evident that the activities and the strategies that were used were intended to be transformative: to equip the adolescent girls with skills and knowledges to survive the challenging environments of the refugee camps and numerous transitions. The program used a range of learning strategies: simulation activities, scenarios, dialogues, case study stories and role plays. These fit with Freire's (1993) problem-posing approach to education.

Simulation learning activities allowed the adolescents to imagine a hypothetical situation, and then to reflect on it and discuss it with their peers, thus listening to different opinions. Through being involved in these activities in ways that were relevant to them, the adolescent girls were able to bring their experiences and present their reflections in the discussions that followed. The participatory learning in this instance created what Shen et al. (2004) referred to when they talked about evaluation as "a valuable, lifelong, everyday skill that incorporates critical thinking and analysis" (p. 11). In shaping learning in this way, the peer education sessions enabled "deeper learning" and "increased awareness, and interest in, the issues surrounding topics covered in class" (Shen et al. 2004, p. 11). In terms of Paul and Quiggin's (2020) transformative education, the girls were able to see "new ways of looking at the

world" (p. 579) and to consider how they might act in particular circumstances.

This all occurred in the informal environment of the youth space. The activities were not part of a formal educational institution or a traditional classroom. Scenarios put the adolescent girls into an imaginary social environment where they were given the opportunity to see what it would be like to be in another's shoes and to feel their feelings, and then to reflect on those vicarious experiences. In Mezirow's (2000) terms, creating these experiences is a form of transformative learning that assists the conceptual understandings of the learners (Ukpokodu 2007). Fernando and Marikar (2017) argued that "learning is an active experience" (p. 110), and each of the strategies used by the peer educators helped to create active experiences.

Case study story, as a participatory learning method, was also used in the peer education program. In this strategy, the adolescent girls formed groups and each group was assigned a hypothetical story, usually no longer than one or two paragraphs, to analyse and reflect on. In one activity, the case studies centred on puberty. For example, one of the groups had to study a case about a 13-year-old girl who saw blood in her underwear. This activity aimed to raise awareness of menstruation. After a discussion amongst themselves, the group members presented a list of possible actions the girl in their story could take, including telling her mother or elder sister, asking for a sanitary pad, keeping herself warm, and so on. After the group presented their solutions to the full group of participants, the peer educator asked additional questions relating to the focus topic of menstruation (e.g., What is the first reaction when we menstruate? How do we feel? What do we do? How can we look after ourselves and keep hygienic?). This was to consolidate their learning. In the interviews after the program, a number of the adolescent girls reflected on this session in particular, stating that "I learned a lot" and "it was informative," while another participant mentioned: "I was not shy when we spoke about it."

Role plays were also used as a learning strategy. One activity saw the adolescent girls in assigned groups, with each group having a story to depict in a role play. The stories were provided on a piece of paper and included: an abusive father at home, bullying among peers at school, arguments among siblings at home, and parent-daughter relationships. The groups had time to plan their role plays and assign roles to each member of the group, before presenting to the whole group. The peer educator then posed questions, such as what a certain character could have done or said differently to achieve a more positive outcome. These questions invited input from the adolescent girls and provoked them to think further about the situations being considered. The adolescents were expressive and outspoken when explaining what each character could have done differently. They also criticised behaviours they saw within the role play. In other words, they were dealing with alterna-

tive ways of understanding events that were relevant to their lives (Paul & Quiggin 2020).

The overall purpose was that their learning could be transferred into their real lives, in terms of being aware of the issues that might affect them. Having previous knowledge, having thought about an issue before its occurrence, or knowing some of the options that might be possible, could allow for healthier decisions or better developed coping mechanisms. Role play also meant that the adolescent girls had rehearsed some possible ways of acting in particular situations or transitions in their lives.

One example was where a group depicted a scenario of early marriage. In the role play, the father of the bride-to-be and the father of the groom-to-be were negotiating the marriage. The bride-to-be was called in and told that tomorrow a Sheikh [religious man] would come and wed the two. The bride-to-be cried and remained silent. The scenario was well-played by the adolescent girls and immersed their peers in emotions. In the discussion, the peer educator asked the girls why the young girl in the role play did not speak up, and one of the girls held her hand up, replying: "If she speaks, she will be hit." Other girls gave various different opinions of the story they saw, and reflected on examples from the real lives of people they knew who were married early, either by choice or by force.

These activities had clear purposes. They drew on real life examples, but they also made the program participants aware of the prevalence of issues that could affect them at that time, or in the future. In addition, the process, particularly the dialogue that was part of the discussion after each activity, provided options–others way of seeing their world (Paul & Quiggin 2020)–for dealing with such issues. In both camps, the adolescent girls reflected on the activities positively, describing the experience as "fun … informative … enjoyable … interesting and a change of scenery and atmosphere." After the sessions were finished, one of the girls said, "I didn't have nice friends at school. I didn't like school. Here [the peer education program] was nice, good friends and fun … I benefitted a lot here. I learned."

4 Implications

The peer education program demonstrated an educational response to the specific challenges that Adey et al. (2020) and Kabranian-Melkonian (2015) described as characteristic of displacement. It offered education in a safe space and, unlike most peer education programs, it did not sit within a formal educational institution. Instead, it was an educational intervention offered in an informal learning environment in a humanitarian context.

Education is a tool for transformation (Freire 1993), and the manual (UNFPA 2005) and the peer educators identified this as an aim of the program. Using what Ukpokodu (2007) called an “activist pedagogy” (p. 315), the program provided opportunities for the adolescent girls to engage with and reflect on their lived challenges, and to take control of their own lives. By using active (Fernando & Marikar 2017; Ukpokodu 2007) and dialogic (Freire 1993) strategies to build problem-solving capacities, the program addressed social issues, such as child marriage, identified by Chakraborty (2019), El Arab and Sagbakken (2019) and Mourtada et al. (2017) as high risk.

Through educating the adolescent girls about issues relevant to their daily lives, the program aimed to empower them (Ukpokodu 2007) and develop strategies for coping with major life transitions. These coping strategies included learning how to deal with the challenges of the living conditions in the camp, how to make decisions that would ensure their health and safety, and how to manage emotions and relationships. Although the program explored issues similar to peer education programs in other locations (Southgate & Aggleton 2017), it was context-specific, focused on displacement (Adey et al. 2020; Kabranian-Melkonian 2015), and operated at the intersection of transitions experienced by the adolescent girls. Their learning meant that they were more likely to become agentic and be able to respond in a more informed way when transitions affected their lives.

As the discussion of data showed, the peer education program attempted to be responsive to the transitional needs of the adolescent girls and made their learning relevant to their lives in the refugee camp. However, the program went further than that, by considering issues and challenges that the girls might face in the future. In other words, the program aimed to facilitate survival in the here and now–the short-lived transformation that Paul and Quiggin (2020) talked about–as well as providing longer-term transformation that would equip them for future challenges. Thus the program was aimed at upskilling the adolescent girls for their “unknowable future[s]” (Dryden-Peterson 2017, p. 14).

The peer education program was an opportunity for real or potential problems to be considered, as a way of assisting the adolescent girls to gain awareness and skills to cope with life changing matters and to be able to make healthy decisions about circumstances that might be life threatening. Awareness-raising, decision-making and coping skills were all incorporated into the program. These reflected the lives the adolescents lived on a day-to-day basis, including the transitional challenges they faced. The topics of puberty and addiction, for example, were deliberately a focus of the program and this meant that the girls developed awareness about the issues and considered how they might respond.

In the research interviews and observations, there was a clear indication of the necessity of the peer education program to be responsive to the needs of the adolescent girls and for their learning to be relevant to their lives in refugee camps. As a result, the program and those conducting the program also needed to be flexible, both with the content and the management of timing and how the program functioned. Although the girls themselves were generally not aware of the issues and challenges they could face in the future, the program was building skills and understandings that should enable them to cope in new situations and contexts.

5 Conclusion

The peer education program was purpose-designed for adolescent girls in refugee camp contexts. This form of education was deliberately planned to have transformative effects. These were seen to emerge through opportunities for the adolescent girls to develop their communication abilities, to learn how to cope emotionally, and to be confident in thinking about decisions they might need to make as they live through future transitions.

Although life in refugee camps is uncertain and sometimes refugees live in camps for years, if not decades, the intent of the peer education program was to prepare them for whatever their lives might hold. Some refugees hope to move to developed countries for a new beginning. If that became a possibility, the girls would probably not bring a strong formal school education with them. However, educators in locations that receive refugees would benefit from understanding the type and intent of the informal educational opportunities that young people have experienced. Although our study did not collect data about the longer term effects of the program, it did show that it offered the adolescent girls the opportunity to be agentic, by developing skills and understandings that would enable them to cope with change in and to other contexts. In other words, the program focused on life and survival skills for the girls' current lives in the refugee camps, but it also had a futures orientation.

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Landscaping educational transitions of Syrian students in the primary school context in Turkey: An ethnographic study

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1 Introduction

Turkey has been one of the countries that closely witnessed the most devastating humanitarian crisis after WWII. The civil war has caused the displacement of over 6.6 million Syrians since 2011. 5.6 million of them have been hosted by neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (UNHCR, 2021). Turkey has the largest population, with 3.7 million Syrian refugees who mostly (98%) live in rural and urban areas (Ministry of Interior, 2022).

Such a vast transition that ends up in another country may cause several challenges for forcedly migrated people. While dealing with war-related stressors due to witnessing major loss, violence, separation from the family, community, and social networks, or loss of status and home, they have to adapt to their new lives in the host countries (Posselt et al., 2018). Therewithal, the circumstances might be challenging, including poverty, unemployment, difficulty in meeting basic needs such as public health, sheltering, and education, fear of deportation and future, or exposing marginalization, hostility, and racism (Smeekes et al., 2017). The adverse circumstances, instability, and challenging experiences accompanying a multidimensional transition process -from being host to guest or from being in the majority to minority- might have profound unfavorable effects on children who still have a greater dependence on outside sources for their social, emotional, and psychological well-being (Fazel and Stein, 2002). Studies show that refugee children are highly prone to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety with sleep disorders (Samara et al., 2019). They are among the most vulnerable groups facing challenging circumstances yet are most likely to be overlooked due to slow and gradual progress in education policies (Cerna, 2019).

Education is a human right, and whatever the circumstances are, all children have the right to reach quality education, and it might mean a safe space and a source of hope for refugee children (UNHCR, 2019). Schools can sup-

port children's social, cultural, emotional, and psychological adaptation, offer new possibilities, boost self-esteem and self-reliance, and ensure a smooth transition while integrating refugee children resiliently to their new environment [Fazel and Stein, 2002; Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2015]. Education can also reduce child labor, child marriage, dangerous or exploitative work, and teenage pregnancy by protecting children from the challenges of everyday life and providing options (UNHCR, 2016).

There are approximately 1.12 million school-aged Syrian children in Turkey; however, only 65% could access education in the 2020-2021 academic year, the highest rate since 2014 [Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 2022]. The school enrolment rates of refugees are 34.3%, 75.1%, 80%, and 42.6%, respectively, for pre-school, primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels (MoNE, 2022). Thus, primary school is the first step for most Syrian students to reach education.

On the other hand, school enrolment does not mean a smooth educational transition alone. According to several international (Baak, 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2015) and national (HRW, 2015; Tunga, Engin, and Çağıltay, 2020; Unutulmaz, 2018) research findings, refugee students have to tackle serious challenges such as access to education, language barrier, bullying, discrimination, or hostility at school, difficulties in cultural adaptation, teacher-included exclusion, and academic failure. When we consider the host countries with their development and stability challenges, the transitional process becomes more challenging for either side (UNHCR, 2016). For instance, the countries that show solidarity with Syrian refugees do not have well-prepared policies and practices based on previous experiences (Culbertson and Constant, 2015). Therefore, to enhance the educational transition of refugee students, rapid and effective improvements are needed to avoid 'lost generations.' This ethnographic study aims to landscape the transitional experiences of Syrian students from the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of local teachers, students, psychological counselors, and school managers in primary school settings since their perceptions, attitudes, and competencies critically impact refugee students' transition in multiple aspects.

1.1 Education policies for Syrian refugees from 2011 onwards

According to Unutulmaz (2018), the evolution of education policies toward Syrians consists of three overlapping stages parallel with the country's political vision towards Syrians' existence. Stage one depended on the belief about the temporariness of Syrians' existence, and there was no educational policy regarding the needs of Syrian school-aged children from 2011 to 2014.

The second stage starts with accepting Syrians' long-term existence within the context of the Foreigner and International Protection Law that entered into force in 2013.[1] Giving Syrians *temporary protection* status ensured the right to education, health, and work. Acknowledging their long-term existence also brought a new perspective about 'controlling' Syrians' educational process. Ultimately, a mixed education model that the government controls was practiced starting from 2014. According to this model, there were three options for Syrian children to continue their education: registering in a formal Turkish school as legal residents, enrolling in Temporary Education Centers (TEC) where accredited volunteer teachers implemented an accredited curriculum in Arabic, or attending a community-based education program (CEP) in Arabic usually financed by local, national, or international non-governmental organizations through joint coordination with the MoNE.

Finally, the third stage refers to the full integration of Syrian children into the formal education system starting from 2016, which still is the case, meaning a gradual transition about the closure of TECs and CEPs in three years. However, almost four thousand Syrian children could not reach education in the 2020-2021 academic year (MoNE, 2022). In addition, even 65% could register in a school, the readiness of the national curriculum through an inclusive perspective towards Syrian students, the readiness level of teachers to teach in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, or the readiness level of Syrian students about attending classrooms with a monolingual structure remains on the agenda.

Research uncovers the noteworthiness of language barrier of Syrian children that negatively affects their educational transition (Aydın and Kaya, 2017; Tunga et al., 2020), and the prejudices and negative attitudes of teachers due to being inadequate to teach in multilingual classrooms and to manage the cultural diversity in multicultural classrooms (Gömleksiz and Aslan, 2018; Tunga et al., 2020). Again, several studies reveal local parents' and students' prejudiced opinions and negative attitudes towards refugee children at schools (Beyazova and Akbaş, 2016; Kaysılı, Soylu, and Sever, 2019).

In the textbooks, official discourse towards the refugees hinges upon the statist approach that applauds '*Turkish generosity*' and '*lending a helping hand*' (Sen, 2020) rather than contextualizing the issue from a human rights perspective. Similarly, a *tolerance discourse* has been embraced that is prone to produce a hierarchy. Still, local parents, students, and teachers have mostly a negative approach blended with inadequate competencies about living in a multicultural and multilingual society. All these factors influence the transition of Syrian students into schools and society from multiple aspects in Turkey. Thus it is essential to landscape the experiences of Syrian students

1 Despite being a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention since 1961, Turkey has accepted refugees only from Europe (Kirişçi, 2014). Therefore, until 2014, Syrians have not had legal status.

scholarly during their educational transition by analyzing diverse school members' interactions, perceptions, and experiences to generate constructive discussions and suggestions.

2 Methodology

"*Ethnography deals with people in a collective sense"* and involves the examination of the group's learned and shared attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions (Angrosino, 2007:1). Since ethnographic research primarily utilizes interviews and participant observations to discern the patterns, I conducted participant observations and semi-structured interviews to obtain a holistic picture of the transitional experiences of Syrian students. Ultimately, everyday experiences, perceptions, opinions, interactions, attitudes, and behaviors of educators -namely teachers, managers, counselors- and students were analyzed through the data collected from 11 primary schools in 2018 in a Southern city with a high refugee population.

2.1 Participants

Participants of the study were involved in terms of some pre-determined criteria. Culturally diverse primary school settings were purposefully selected by considering socioeconomic diversity rather than selecting individuals. Thus, schools located in low, middle, and upper-middle socioeconomic level regions were attempted to be included from all central districts. After selecting schools, participants were selected regarding voluntariness and gender. Table 1 illustrates the salient characteristics of the schools and interviewed educators.

As can be seen from Table 1, school sizes changed between 332 to 2150. School J had the largest Syrian student population; 29.2% were Syrian. The proportion of Syrian students was more than 15% in schools X (22.2%), F (21.2%), and P (16.2%), while school L had the least number of Syrian students. The majority of the teachers (n=17, 63%) and counselors (n=6, 60%) were female; in contrast, most of the interviewed school managers (n=7, 70%) were male. Only six schools were selected for the classroom observations by considering their socioeconomic profile, and the teachers were selected considering voluntariness and gender. Table 2 shows the teacher and classroom profiles.

Table 1. Salient characteristics of schools and interviewed educators

					Teachers (T)		**Counselors (C)**		**Managers (M)**	
District	School code	SES	School size	Syrian students *(n)*	F	M	F	M	F	M
1	E	Low	1818	120	3	–	1	–	–	–
	F	Low	944	200	–	2	–	1	–	1
	X	Low	1124	250	1	–	1	–	–	1
2	H	Low	1100	48	2	–	1	–	1	–
	J	Low	1028	300	–	1	–	1	–	1
	K	Low	332	36	1	1	1	–	–	1
	L	Lower-middle	960	33	2	1	1	–	–	1
3	O	Middle	2150	301	3	–	–	1	2	–
	P	Middle	1581	257	2	1	–	–	–	–
	V	Middle	985	117	2	2	1	–	–	1
4	AC	Upper-middle	610	35	1	2	–	1	–	1
Total	11				17	10	6	4	3	7

Note: Managers indicate school principals and vice-principals together. While presenting the findings, the participants were coded regarding their professions, so teachers were coded with 'T,' counselors with 'C,' and managers with 'M.'

Table 2. Teacher and classroom profiles for in-class observations

	School profile	**Teacher profile**			
Code	SES	Gender	Experience (years)	Classroom size	Observation duration (class hours)
E1	Low	F	13	25	5
X1	Low	F	40	41	8
H1	Low	F	29	28	5
L1	Lower-middle	M	29	41	8
L2	Lower- middle	F	20	35	8
V1	Middle	M	20	37	8
AC1	Upper-middle	M	36	25	8

Teachers had at least 13 years of teaching experience. Classroom sizes changed between 25 to 41. All classrooms were observed for at least 5 class hours, and mostly 8 class hours (one-month) observations were completed. Ultimately, 50 class hours of in-class observations were conducted, as well as my unstructured observations in the halls, teachers' rooms, or gardens of the schools.

2.2 Data collection tools

Three parallel semi-structured interview forms for teachers, managers and counselors were developed in four steps. The first drafts were developed by considering the related literature. Then, expert opinions were taken, and the forms were reviewed accordingly. In the third phase, the reviewed forms were piloted for face and content validity purposes with the participation of teachers (*n=4*), managers (*n=4*), and counselors (*n=3*), and they were revised by changing wordings or rewriting some of them. Finally, the pilot interviews were conducted with teachers (*n=2*), counselors (*n=2*), and a manager (*n=1*), and all the forms were revised, this time by also adding or removing some questions for getting valid responses within the context of the study. Ultimately, participants were asked about the advantages and challenges of working with refugee students in culturally diverse school settings to obtain data about their perceptions and attitudes.

For the classroom observations, structured classroom observation was developed at first. It was transformed into a more flexible format that facilitates in-depth note-taking after the first observation due to the difficulty of writing down emotions, questions, behaviors, attitudes, responses, or activities separately in a structured manner.

2.3 Data analysis

Data consists of the transcripts of the interviews, unstructured field notes that depended on the unstructured observations in schools, and the notes taken during the classroom observations. Data analysis took place inductively via content analysis in three steps; data *immersion*, data *analysis*, and *interpretation* (Saldana, 2013). The data was interpreted and presented holistically by considering the expressions collected from diverse cohorts -teachers, students, counselors, managers, me as the researcher- to map the field authentically.

To ensure credibility, data sources and gathering methods were triangulated, the data collection forms were subjected to expert audit, and pilot interviews were conducted. Besides, purposive sampling was utilized to increase the transferability of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3 Findings

This part presents the findings, and two main themes have emerged during the data analysis. The first covers the general condition of Syrian refugees living in the Southern city where the data was collected. Therefore, the barriers to continuing education are presented. Secondly, the barriers that block a smooth education transition are shared.

3.1 The first step to school: Barriers to continue education

The majority of the schools were located in low-income and in-migration regions. The neighborhoods of those schools were mainly receiving migration from the Eastern part of Turkey and Syria. Therefore, migration was a distinct factor that shaped the educational process.

Low economic income and living in adverse physical conditions were highlighted as related to Syrian students' general conditions that influence their educational experiences. For instance, absenteeism due to child labor or ongoing migration from Turkey to Europe were common themes that shaped Syrian refugee students' schooling process.

Observation findings uncovered the diversity among Syrian students. In middle or upper-middle socioeconomic regions, Syrian parents had the economic potential to support their children's schooling process by hiring tutors or buying additional materials. In this way, higher-status students did not fall behind the class compared to lower-status peers. Thus, the intersection of socioeconomic class and its binding effect on the educational transitions of low, middle, and upper-middle status refugee students explicitly emerged. Nevertheless, findings also demonstrated that some barriers block a smooth education transition for Syrian students regardless of socioeconomic status.

3.2 Barriers that block a smooth educational transition

This part starts with presenting the findings of the language barrier, then continues with the prejudices and negative attitudes of local parents and students towards Syrians; finally, teacher prejudices and competencies are shared.

3.2.1 Language barrier

The language barrier was defined as the main challenge by the majority of the educators. Syrian students start school without attending Turkish language training. They face the challenge of adapting culturally, lingually, and socially to new environments. This eventually causes a challenging educational transition followed by low academic success since they cannot participate in the instructional process:

> …if refugee children enroll in the third or fourth grades, unfortunately, what we can do is very limited, no matter how much the teachers do in the classroom…if they could not read and write, naturally get bored during the lessons…(H-C1)

As reported by some participants, if refugee children start school from the first grade without losing a year, there is no profound problem. However, suppose they start from 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade. In that case, two difficulties are experienced: difficulties in learning Turkish, since teachers cannot spare enough time, and feeling bad psychologically because of being older than the rest of the class, which eventually affects their motivation to continue school.

In addition to that, teachers reported difficulties they faced due to the language barrier. According to some teachers, having several challenging tasks, such as dealing with the curriculum, the language barrier, answering parent expectations, and dealing with all of them simultaneously caused a decrease in the academic success of all students. For instance, as F-T1 emphasized, the success rate decreased after refugees enrolled in his classroom. Several teachers emphasized that refugee students were prone to talk to each other as they could not understand the lesson. Eventually, most of the lessons pass by saying hush to those students.

Observation findings verified these statements. Syrian students who did not know Turkish and were older than the rest of the class were sitting at the back desks and disconnected from the instructional process. In contrast, those who learned Turkish seemed more motivated and active during the class. Therefore, the language barrier emerged as one of the most distinct obstacles to Syrian students' educational transition into the Turkish context.

3.2.2 *Prejudices and negative attitudes of local parents and students*

Prejudices of local parents and students against refugee students were among the most distinct difficulties experienced by refugee students and parents, regardless of their socioeconomic level:

> At first, parents were uncomfortable with Syrian students' coming to their children's classrooms. They even attempted to take action against this situation…and they thought to gather together, plan an action to get them out of class or something else. They planned to go to the manager or the district national education directorate to complain. (P-T3)

The experiences of the teacher P-T3 were prevalent, and according to the interview findings from managers, counselors, and teachers, there was no exception about this issue. Refugee students were not warmly welcomed by the parents of the local students, which also influenced their children's attitudes:

> Children have very pure personalities; actually, they imitate whatever they see in the family. We have never done any work with local children to prevent prejudices. It is all about parents. Because when the parent says, "Son, you will not be sitting next to a Syrian student," prejudice starts. (O-C1)

Similarly, as H-M1 indicated, some local parents think that Syrians come to 'our homeland' and benefit from 'our resources':

> Syrians are given aid; local students think, 'why we are not provided, why the state is helping them'. In the simplest of all, my daughter thinks like that, while I defend refugee people, and say that 'no, my daughter, they are our siblings, and we could have experienced such a thing'. The child [*my daughter*] is probably impressed by her peers. (H-M1)

Local parents and students, especially those living in low socioeconomic regions, are prone to direct their anger to Syrian refugees since they think they also live in adverse conditions and lack the financial resources to buy stationery equipment. Due to such opinions and prejudices, a minor disagreement between a local and a Syrian student might cause a major conflict between local and Syrian parents, as asserted by the participants from several schools.

Another point that promotes local parents' negative attitudes was considering refugee students as obstacles to their children's academic achievement. For instance, the manager from school F indicated the increasing classroom sizes as the cause of local parents' resistance. Refugee students' enrolment in schools uncoordinatedly -TECs were closed in the city, and refugee students in TECs were enrolled in public schools beginning from the 2017-2018 aca-

demic year- caused tensions. Both interview and observation findings revealed that each school had to deal with the challenges alone.

On the other hand, all the interviewees remarked that they do not experience the resistance of local parents as much as they did at first. Local parents got used to the refugee students' existence in time; however, they remained distant. According to testimonials of some educators, although the prejudiced attitudes and behaviors are not sensed as much as it was previously, there are still invisible lines between Syrian and local students. This was verified through the observations; children were prone to play separately in school gardens and sit in separate desks in classrooms.

Local students' perceptions of Syrians

While observing a 4th-grade classroom in school L, a text from the Human Rights, Civics and Democracy textbook about a Syrian child who had to leave his home because of the war was being discussed (Altay et al., 2018: 32). Related to this text, the teacher asked several questions to make students think empathetically, such as "*when you went to a new place, how do you think the people's perspectives will be about you in there?*" or "*How do we behave such people around us?*". The conversation, to some extent, uncovered the students' perceptions of Syrian refugees. They gave examples of possible discriminative behaviors and attitudes, such as discriminating someone for having a different culture and language, staring at refugees, or ignoring them since they are 'strangers,' refugees could carry some diseases, or refugees could be dangerous. An anecdote of the counselor from school X showed the effect of prejudices on students' world from a different perspective:

> One day one of my students said, 'Teacher, I am learning the Syrian language. Is it bad?' No, it is not; s/he is learning your language, too. Children's perception is negative…Because of their parents' prejudices. (X-C1)

According to several educators, local parents' prejudices negatively impact students and hinder positive communication between local and refugee children.

The language and cultural differences cause conflicts between students

Due to language and cultural differences, conflicts among parents and students complicated the process. Findings manifested the prevalence of conflicts between local and refugee students:

> Conflicts are occurring…Previously refugee students were going to TECs. Two years ago, these schools were closed, and children were distributed to public schools to get used to our culture, but they found their fellow citizens and

> grouped because of language issue. After a while, this turned into gangs. This is the case in most schools. (O-M1)

The teacher P-T1, on the other hand, explained why refugee children form their cultural groups. According to her, two critical reasons are; local students' prejudices and teachers' being unequipped to solve these issues. The findings also explicitly showed the impact of the language barrier on local and refugee students' communication and relationship with each other:

> When they could not overcome the language problem and could not express themselves, the other party [*local students*] always misunderstood them. These are the first events I encountered two years ago in the 2nd grade; students asked if they [*Syrian students*] swore when they said something. They [*local students*] say, "Are you swearing? What do you mean?" and they [*Syrian students*] got angry, and they were fighting with each other. (J-T1)

According to most educators, problems decrease when refugees start to speak Turkish. On the other hand, refugee students are prone to grouping to protect themselves.

Syrian students oppress not to be oppressed

The school E counselor reported groupings among Syrian and local students. According to her, Syrian students were more organized and prone to gang up to protect themselves, not to be oppressed:

> The number of Syrian students is less than our local students. Maybe those students would not have come together in Syria. They have very different personalities, characteristics…but due to the fear of being alone here or the fear of being oppressed, very different children come together just because they have the same national identity. They oppress, not to be oppressed. (E-C1)

> There are conflicts. So I see this during my duty as a hall monitor. They (*refugees)* group up. Syrians have a motivation to protect themselves as a minority in another country. They come together quickly. (P-T1)

Talking different languages, having different cultures and local students' unfriendly attitudes and behaviors caused groupings and conflicts between local and refugee students.

3.2.3 Teacher prejudices

While the school counselor from school H listed many factors that affect local students' attitudes and behaviors towards Syrian children, she indicated the prejudices and negative attitudes of some teachers and school management. Although she did not report any overt discrimination, according to her,

the political processes concerning this issue sometimes affect the approach of the school management and some of the teachers' attitudes which eventually might be sensed by local students.

Similarly, some of the findings revealed that some teachers feel uncomfortable about refugee students' existence in their classrooms:

> Unfortunately, we know that some of the teachers who oppose the government reflect their anger towards children or innocent Syrian citizens…Oh, that is not to say, of course, those kids are mistreated, no. However, teachers do not make a special effort either because students do not know Turkish or have integration problems with our culture. (AC-C1)

On the other hand, some of the interviewees thought that the refugee education policy of the state is causing injustices against Turkish students:

> An individualized program for them [*refugee students*] needs to be implemented. They should not have the same conditions, the same rights… in the future; there will be many problems in the high school entrance exam and then in the university entrance exam. I think they should not have equal rights. (V-C1)

Some teachers do not prefer to spare time due to their criticisms or prejudices, while others cannot spare time due to the language barrier. Observations explicitly manifested teachers' prejudices and negative attitudes. In contrast, observations showed that teachers, who warmly welcomed refugee students, found ways to overcome the challenges for the common good of all students. In addition, the distance between teachers and Syrian support personnel was one of the precise observations I made during the school visits. I did not witness any communication between a local teacher and Syrian support personnel.

Considering refugee students as workload

Findings revealed that teachers mainly considered refugee students as 'workload.' That was the reason of managements' considering the equal distribution of the refugee students into the classrooms, in each school. Teachers were experiencing difficulties while managing multilingual classrooms.

For instance, some of the participant statements showed that teachers involuntarily accept refugee students. Language barrier or being vulnerable psychologically gave teachers a hard time.

On the other hand, according to some teachers, the daily policies without trying to foresee the future or analyzing the possible effects of the actions deepen the challenges in Turkey:

> So this is the country's reality: they came, they will stay here, they will get their education, but the state's daily politics cause the problems…for example, it was entirely wrong for them [*Syrian students*] to study in Syrian schools first and be distributed to our schools in 3rd or even 4th grade. If they had been in our

> schools since the 1st, the education level would be better. It would be beneficial for them, and it would be helpful for us. (P-T1)

The teacher P-T1 thought that the decisions should be given by considering the possible results, and according to her, the challenges they were experiencing were because of the uncoordinated actions.

During the data collection process, I had so many observations that manifested teachers' challenges and their needs while teaching in culturally and lingually diverse classrooms. In such a culturally diverse country, why teacher candidates have not been equipped with skills to teach in multicultural and multilingual classrooms was my biggest question. Therefore, one of the reasons for teacher resistance was observed as teachers' being unequipped to overcome the challenges of teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Educators' being unequipped

The vast majority of the interviewed teachers (*n*=16) and managers (*n*=7), and two school counselors attended in-service training about refugee students' inclusion in the schools and classrooms. As reported, they learned to empathize (*n*=5), how to communicate without discriminating (*n*=1), the concept of inclusive education (*n*=1), and inclusive instructional methods (*n*=3) and shared good practices (*n*=2). However, most of the participated educators (*n*=18) claimed that the training was about awareness-raising rather than capacity development. Besides, some participants (*n*=9) thought that the trainers were insufficient theoretically and practically to guide the training.

4 Discussion

Findings illustrated that the barriers, such as language difference, prejudices of local parents and students, and unequipped teachers, overlap with the barriers presented through the previously conducted studies. Those barriers block a smooth educational transition for Syrian children who are very fragile and prone to suffer depression and anxiety disorders (Samara et al., 2019).

The first barrier was the gradual progress in educational policies concerning Syrian children. Giving policy decisions without considering the outcomes or preparing any of the cohorts cause ignorance or discrimination Syrian children and is a burden on teachers. For instance, while children who start school at a young age adapt to school and new conditions more quickly (HRW, 2015); findings showed that opening TECs, then deciding to close them and integrating all Syrian students into public education created chal-

lenges for children and teachers since both cohorts did not have time to adapt to the new process. Thus, findings explicitly revealed the necessity of considering all cohorts' needs while developing educational policies. Otherwise, even reasonable steps can cause critical barriers.

Language difference was the most distinct barrier, and similar findings were reached by several studies that manifested the ill effect of language barrier on Syrian students' educational transition (Aydın and Kaya, 2017; Yüceer Kardeş et al., 2021; Tunga et al., 2020). Although there were some national projects[2] providing opportunities to refugee children, such as Turkish language courses, catch-up education, or support classes, a limited number of students could be supported. Permanent solutions are needed to support students and teachers, such as providing language education for all, bilingual education opportunities, employment of bicultural staff, or supporting both pre-service and in-service teachers to teach in multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Rutter (2006) identified three discourses that refer to 'good practices' within refugee education: a welcoming environment without discrimination, addressing the psycho-social needs, and meeting the language needs. Although the most distinct barrier was highlighted as the language barrier, findings that revealed the lack of welcoming environment and hostility, anger, or marginalization towards Syrian students appeared more critical. There are previous studies that uncovered the prejudiced opinions and negative attitudes of local parents and consequently local students towards refugee children at schools (Arslan and Ergül, 2021; Beyazova and Akbaş, 2016; Kaysılı et al., 2019; Sakız, 2016).

The transitional process of refugees refers to uncertainty and instability. While a welcoming school environment can support refugee children to build resilience by holding on to the stability that education can ensure, education can do harm for refugee children in conflict settings (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Within this context, education may cause harm in Turkish classrooms where both local parents and students are prone to reproduce prejudices.

On the other hand, not only parents' and students' but also teachers' prejudices emerged through some of the educators' narratives. The educators who were dissentient to the government's refugee policy, or considering refugee students as workload, or the teachers who had difficulties encountering the challenges due to refugee students' existence in their classrooms were prone to reproduce the prejudices. Considering the inadequacy of teachers to teach in multilingual and multicultural classrooms, their inability to manage

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2 There have been two joint projects of MoNE and the European Union; Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES) started in 2016 continued till 2018. After PICTES, Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES) was launched in 2018 and will end in 2022, October.

the process might be the reason for the prejudices or negative attitudes, to some extent, as it is priorly verified by several studies (Erdem, 2017; Gömleksiz and Aslan, 2018).

There is literature expressing the positive attitudes of in-service and prospective teachers and their lack of self-confidence about teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Kotluk and Kocakaya, 2018; Özüdoğru, 2018). Thus, future research can concentrate on the ways to improve the competences of pre-service and in-service teachers to teach in multilingual and multicultural classrooms.

Findings also unmasked the diversity among refugee children. Considering refugee students as a block may cause overgeneralization since when class intersected with being a refugee, the transitional experiences were varied. Within this context, gender might be another prominent factor that needs further consideration in analyzing the transitional experiences of refugee children.

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International efforts to leave refugee education behind through transition to inclusive education

Lisa-Katharina Möhlen, Elvira Seitinger and Seyda Subasi Singh

1 Introduction

The concept of transition is the linchpin in the field of refugee education (Pasic 2015, p. 10). Starting from this and following the book's goal of examining different typologies of transitions, this contribution focuses on identifying international (policy) conditions on refugee transitions and their implementation in five school systems (Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the UK) across Europe.

International rights such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) frame the implementation of education at the national level. International research shows that refugee students are systematically excluded from these rights (Cerna 2019). This exclusion is multifactorial with diverse variables at the micro, meso, and macro-level. On the micro-level, refugee students face various transitions in accessing and sustaining education (Bešic et al. 2020; Gunnþórsdóttir et al. 2018; Panagiotopoulou & Rosen 2018; Proyer et al. 2021). On the meso level, institutions are dependent on resources and political commitment (Cerna 2019; Cruel et al. 2017; Ragnarsdóttir & Hama 2018). On the macro level, societal beliefs and ideology frame the situation of refugee education (Buchner & Proyer 2020; European Commission 2019).

When looking into the circumstances of successful transitions for refugee students in Europe, we see a scientific paradigm shift. Traditional and conventional approaches are being reconsidered (Bauböck & Tripkovic 2017). The scientific debates no longer see refugee education "as [something] temporary [or] something that will settle" (Dovigo et al. 2020: 8). The article shows that this paradigm shift has many similarities with the approach of inclusive education (Florian 2014) because a wide approach to inclusive education considers every student regardless of disability, migration, and refugee background (Biewer & Schütz 2017; UNESCO 2007). Another key aspect of both is the increasing need for cross-national research (European Commission 2019) to gain new insights to improve implementation and meet international goals (Herzog-Punzenberger 2021).

Following this approach, five European universities (Aarhus University, Denmark; University of Vienna, Austria; University of Akureyri, Iceland; the Arctic University, Norway; and the Winchester University, UK) collaborate on the three-year ERASUMS+ project ITIRE (Improving Teacher Education to Improve Refugee Education) to conduct research on these reconsiderations and changes in refugee education across Europe. All five universities are located in the Global North and can be defined as receiving countries. A literature review on refugee education shows that all European countries have valid legal regulations on refugee education, but these are in very early stages (Dovigo et al. 2020: 50). Central findings show that (1) education policies define language competencies to measure the level of inclusion. It seems that language is a precondition for students to participate in the school systems (ibid.: 13, 20). (2) Research indicates that the feeling of belonging in combination with being accepted and valued by others, peers, friends, and teachers shapes the level of inclusion in the community (Allan & Kern 2017; Cerna 2019). (3) The importance of teachers' attitudes and actions regarding refugee children's educational needs and the transitions, from kindergarten to secondary education at the micro-level was also highlighted.

This paper is an impulse to examine refugee transitions against the nexus of macro (policies), meso (institutional factors), and the micro (teachers' attitudes and actions) level by asking: What are international conditions in refugee education to promote sustainable education and transitions in Global North countries? The discussion will be framed by theoretical concepts of refugee and inclusive education. Both follow a human rights-based approach.

2 Theoretical framework

The contribution frames refugee and inclusive education as a human right anchored internationally and adopted by national contexts. Due to flight and complex education systems, refugee students face various transitions. Refugee and inclusive education are holistic and interdisciplinary concepts that do not determine individual factors.

2.1 International rights and regulations towards refugee and inclusive education

The Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951, Article 22 Public Education states that "refugees [shall receive] the same

treatment as is accorded to nationals concerning elementary education". The convention assures the right to education for refugee children just like their national peers. The EU adopted the Reception Conditions Directive from 2013, Article 14 Education, Paragraph 1, which states that refugee "minors [shall have] access to the education system under similar conditions as their nationals". It calls for giving refugee students the right to education and Paragraph 2 and 3 specify this by stating that

> "preparatory classes, including language classes, shall be provided to minors where it is necessary to facilitate their access to and participation in the education system as set out in paragraph 1 […] 3. Where access to the education system as set out in paragraph 1 is not possible due to the specific situation of the minor, the Member State concerned shall offer other education arrangements in aby national law and practice."

It becomes clear that refugee children have the right to education, but not necessarily on the same terms as their national peer learners. The statement creates an interpretation space to adapt it according to the national levels.

In 1994, the Salamanca statement was the first cross-national definition of the right to education, particularly for students with disabilities. The CRPD from 2007, Article 24 Education, encourages that "States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels." It claims the right to education for all in an inclusive education system. The CRPD is the first official treaty that follows an international aim to establish the idea of education for all. Similar to the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, it creates an interpretation space to adapt it according to the national levels. SDG 4, as the UNESCO agenda 2030, proclaims the reduction of barriers to promote participation and access to education for all. Compared to the CPRD, it is not obligatory but set an agenda at the national level.

2.2 Scientific discourse on refugee and inclusive education

Looking at scientific approaches, refugee education as a holistic approach considers "institutional factors that influence the opportunities that refugee children have in education at the macro, meso, and micro-level" (Cruel et al. 2017: 63). It moves away from singular factors (Nilsson & Bunar 2016), such as traumatic experiences, and psychosocial conditions that are individually determined toward a holistic and interdisciplinary viewpoint.

With inclusive education, the discourse has also shifted from intervention on an individual level to addressing environmental barriers and facilitators that lead to exclusion and limit people's participation. Thus, the approach moves away from a deficit-orientated perspective of blaming individuals for

their impairments. The UNESCO (2005) states that inclusion considers "the diversity of needs of all learners […] and covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that is the responsibility of the mainstream system to educate all children". It demonstrates that all children have the equal right to education regardless of social attributions and categorizations. Based on these developments, inclusion is defined as a "process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion" (Florian 2014: 288).

Although international regulations promote refugee and inclusive education, in practice integrating, separating and exclusionary structures are evident in the five countries (Dovigo et al. 2020). In the case of refugee students, Iceland and the UK promote mainstream education while the three other countries have different concepts for newly arrived students like preparatory classes (Dovigo et al. 2020: 17; Proyer, Biewer, Kreuter & Weiß 2021; Thorud 2017). The concept of capability, mostly being able to understand and speak the national language, is used as the key criteria to measure students' inclusion level.

2.3 Teachers' role in transition processes

Due to the so-called EU refugee quota, the transition from one country to another is very likely to happen. In Austria, Denmark, and Norway, the transition from a segregated setting like reception classes into the mainstream school system causes change after the acclimatization in the receiving country (European Commission 2019: 83; Dovigo et al. 2020: 17; Proyer, Biewer, Kreuter & Weiß 2021). It is also possible to transit several education systems within one country because in countries like Austria education is a matter of the federal state. Even within the same system, transitions are possible when the secondary school system is dual or more tracked (Buchner & Proyer 2020). All these transitions make it massively more difficult for children and young people to access sustainable quality education (Cerna 2019).

Looking at scientific approaches, transitions in education are often associated with transitions from one institutional level to another. UNICEF defines transitions in educational settings as

> "children moving into and adjusting to new learning environments, families learning to work within a sociocultural system (i.e. education) and school making provisions for admitting new children into the system." (UNICEF 2012: 8)

Following this definition, transitions seem to be a one-way process. Pasic (2015: 10) proclaims to consider the numerous and multiple transitions influencing the educational situation of refugee students. It shows that the (scientific) concept of transitions is a fuzzy one.

Hereby, teachers play a crucial role in refugee education (Dovigo 2020). Multi-professional tasks challenge teachers' roles in the context of refugee education and transition. They are often the first representatives of the new (education) system. In the first instance, they are persons of reference for the students, but also for their guardians. Teachers function as guides, gatekeepers, and mediators (Dovigo et al. 2020: 50). In the second instance, teachers need to fulfill their duty in educating. There are several strategies and good practices how to educate refugees education across Europe (Dovigo et al. 2020).

A cross-national study investigated the teachers' role in transitions (Cuconato, du Bois-Reymond & Lunabba 2015) and concluded that, among other things, teachers "support focus […] on access and opportunities, and […] on students' well-being" in transition (ibid.: 311). Especially in countries where students have to decide on the school track, transitions seem to be very difficult to accompany (ibid.: 320) Refugee education and transitions "depend on well-skilled and well-supported teachers who take into account the diversity of their student populations in their instructional approaches" (Cerna 2019: 30). The author further develops that „teachers might see refugees in different ways than other students, which can affect their teaching practices and expectations" (ibid.). Research shows that teachers' attitudes shape children's educational success (Pin-ten, Cate & Glock 2019; Schwab, Resch & Alnahdi 2021).

3 Methodological approach

This contribution disseminates partial findings of the Erasmus+ project ITIRE. A focus group interview was conducted on teachers' perceptions of the conditions in which refugee education is taking place within these countries. Seven teachers and three teacher educators from Austria, Denmark, Norway, and the UK attended the focus group. All of them are teachers who supported the ITIRE project over the three years. Three of the interviewees were male and seven female. Teaching experiences differed from one to more than twenty years.

During the 1.5 hours interview, teachers discussed and reflected on their experiences. The Icelandic project teachers were also invited but could not attend the focus group. They provided written material with examples of good practices from Iceland. Beforehand, all teachers signed an informed consent form to ensure their anonymity. Subsequently, the recorded focus group interview was transcribed. The Viennese project team conducted a secondary analysis of the transcript. A post-modern Grounded Theory approach guided the analyses (Clarke 2005). The method of situation analysis

aims to identify the situation's underlying patterns, structures, and discourses from a cross-national perspective (ibid.).

4 Empirical findings

4.1 Project-based good practices to support transitions

Teachers from three countries (Austria, Denmark, and Norway) reported on supporting transition processes when refugee students newly arrive.

> "Teacher C: We have loads of projects, not only at our school but anywhere in City A and maybe in other schools across Country A. These are projects that work in a microcosmos." (p. 9, l. 301-303)

According to the teachers, the projects seem to work out at the school level. "The question that we were discussing and which we couldn't get over: Is that now good practice" (p. 9, l. 303) to support transitions in refugee education? The interviewees question the quality and sustainability of their project-based good practices.

Teachers from Country A introduce the SWOT analysis as a tool to evaluate the quality of project-based good practices. It allows an analysis "about its strengths and weaknesses" (p. 8, l. 260), the opportunities, and the threats. Compared to criteria such as grades, the SWOT analysis opens the space for questioning, „aspect[s] of the school life, connected with kids, with a refugee background, and whether that works good or not" (p. 7, l. 223-224). It seems that the SWOT analysis provides a holistic approach to evaluating project-based good practices considering the micro, meso, and macro-level. The SWOT analysis does not "generalize a good practice, so we can also figure out [what] doesn't work very well" (p. 9, l. 321-223).

The teachers indicate that the underlying intention and the overall goal of project-based good practices are the most crucial and pivotal points to analyse the quality and sustainability (p. 7, l. 185; p. 8, l. 263-266). Thus, the goals of refugee education have to be defined in the first instance. However, the teachers are discordant about what is the goal of refugee education. The participants agreed on the fact that the students' academic achievements express the quality of project-based good practices in the current school systems (p. 13, l. 466-473). The interviewees emphasized that academic performance alone is not sufficient to assess the quality of project-based good practices. Especially in the case of newly arrived students, it is not appropriate to access project-based good practices using academic performance and grades.

It leads to a very high dropout rate among these students and puts project-based good practices in a poor light (p. 13, l. 473-475).

Within the frame of the international interview setting, the teachers mentioned the transfer and sustainability of project-based good practices in other contexts, classrooms, schools, and countries.

> "Teacher C: It was a controversial discussion in our team. I'm not convinced that it is a good idea in collecting small projects. […] The question is if they're transferred sustainably to another situation."

> "Teacher L: And it's so hard to transfer them because the settings are different. For example, we have around 25 students per class, we don't know what is the setting in Country D or Country C or Country E. So, it's a lot about the organization, about government rules, etc." (p. 9, l. 312-319)

The participants seemed sceptical regarding the transfer and sustainability of project-based good practices in broader and international contexts. They cited the dependency between transfer, sustainability, and external conditions as local circumstances, school organization, national policies, etc.

4.2 Key components for transitions in refugee education

The unanimous opinion among the teachers was that accessing project-based good practices goes beyond criteria such as academic achievements and grades. Instead, the students' well-being and related aspects are central components of refugee education and transition processes.

> "Teacher G: Is it a criterion that our students who came from another country, who are refugees here, just find friends? That he or she is happy at school? He[/she] can understand the lessons, he[/she] can participate daily and just be happy, but not so successful measured in grade. Is that a criterion for being a good practice to have happy kids who participate, who are part of the big family we are at school? Is that a criterion or not?" (p. 5, l. 157-162)

The focus shifted away from academic performance to social indicators. Another participant underlines the importance of students' participation in refugee education and transition processes.

> "Teacher L: I think it could also be interesting to look at the level of participation as something that's defining for good practice. Because I think participation is so many things. […] When he[/she] asks for clarification from one of his[/her] classmates about something that is being said, that's also one kind of participation. So, in terms of what is leading to best practice, how are the children seated in that classroom? Is she[/he] able to ask those questions? Is he[/she] sitting next

> to someone that he[/she] feels comfortable with asking that question? Is he[/she] sitting with someone that allows her/him to ask that question?" (p. 6, l. 191-201)

The quote demonstrates that project-based good practices increase participation. Teachers' role is the provision and creation of a suitable learning environment meeting the students' needs while transitioning.

The participants agreed on the fact that the angle of perspective shapes the project-based good practices. "So, the question of the perspective is very important." (p. 5, l. 142-143) Especially, in the field of refugee education, „there are lots of perspectives on this topic" (p. 1, l. 43-44). Participants demanded that a variety of perspectives has to be considered when assessing project-based good practices. It would lead to more "transparency in terms of why do we do the things we do" (p. 12, l. 404-405), even if the different perspectives partially contradict each other. Hereby, the teachers interviewed see the largest discrepancy between integrating the state and the socio-emotional perspective in project-based good practices.

4.3 Criteria and values of and for inclusive education

„But if we are discussing the question of a good practice in school or RE, there are different kinds of good." (p. 5, l. 171-172) This statement asks what the definition of good is, who defines project-based good practices as good, and whether the people involved share the same intention. It shows that ethical implications go hand in hand with education and transition processes.

> "Teacher E: It is about providing an ethos. And feel safe about the school or a city that doesn't matter where you come from, whether you are seeking sanctuary from war, from persecution, wherever you are, you feel safe and welcoming. I think it's the education of every child, not just the refugees." (p. 11, l. 381-384)

The quote defines an ethos that includes all students regardless of social dimensions such as their background. „Every member of that school from the top to the bottom and every child and parent is aware of the needs and the risks that face those that are seeking sanctuary." (p.11, l. 365-367) Not only individuals, but the entire school community and beyond represent such an ethos. It highlights the importance of community and societal embedding. Teacher E gave more insights into a system implementing the idea of sanctuary. "The aim is to be so inclusive that in a sense, there isn't a set for refugee education. Every child receives the same education." (p. 11, l. 393-395) Following this, refugee education and the focus on transitions would be redundant if inclusive values and structures were established (p. 5, l. 188-190). Nonetheless, this approach is tied to the normative values and goals of inclu-

sion. The interviewed teachers agreed once again that a normative frame is needed to develop didactic concepts for teaching and educating students.

The material shows that teachers look for predefined goals and criteria for orientation (p. 5, l. 171-172; p. 6, l. 185). Participants from Austria, Denmark, and Norway seemed to be left alone in terms of refugee education and transition processes. They reported on missing guidelines and policies. The UK shows an existing system of implementation of refugee education in particular and inclusive education in general.

> "[…] Those schools have several criteria that they must meet nationally too, so have that accreditation, and this is a movement that we are trying to now grow, you know, say 20 years ahead we want all schools in Area A to have it. And there are schools all over the country and beyond that have it now. And, but it's become a very powerful movement." (p. 11, l. 370-374)

Thus, there are quality standards for all, because the established movement is based on predefined inclusive values. Teachers are embedded and guided by these values and design their practices accordingly. Interestingly, the discussion about providing an ethos and inclusive values is not determined by issues like academic performance and grades. The teachers see the provision of an inclusive environment as the foundation for education and transition processes.

5 Discussion

5.1 Transitions in refugee education – from project-based to special education practices

Austria, Denmark, and Norway implement the right to education, but in segregated ways. While newly arrived students are taught separately from their peers in preparatory classes in Austria and Denmark (Dovigo et al. 2020: 17; Proyer et al. 2021), students in Norway are taught according to their abilities either in part-time or fully separated settings (Thourd 2017). If students reach a sufficient language level in the respective national languages and the legal status allows (except in Norway), the transition into mainstream education takes place (Proyer et al. 2021; Vitus & Lidén 2010). Policies and resulting implementations in Austria and Denmark are linked to the concept of dis/ability and point to special education until students meet requirements to attend mainstream classes (European Commission 2019: 82). According to Panagiotopoulou and Rosen (2018), language assimilation is key to accessing the national education systems. It is anchored in diverse policies across Eu-

rope (Dovigo 2020). It seems that "some countries tend to focus on competencies in the host language rather than immigration information in their education policies" (ibid.: 88).

In all systems, academic performance builds the basis for directing teaching and evaluating the quality of teaching. The interviewees call for appropriate tools that evaluate their project-based good practices. Practices depend on teachers' engagement, attitudes, and views on refugee students (Cerna 2019: 30). However, the teachers interviewed pointed out that academic achievement alone is not sufficient to accompany and assess (refugee) students' education in transitions. Social factors are gaining importance, while at the same time the pressure to perform academically is increasing. This ambivalence significantly affects teachers' practice and teaching.

Hence, according to the interviewees, social factors such as participation are a key component in (refugee) education and especially transitions. Students' participation should be the main goal in daily practice. Nevertheless, they remark a missing definition of participation to define pedagogical goals for their teaching and assessing project-based good practices. It corresponds with Cuconato et al. (2015) that teachers focus on providing access and fostering students' well-being in transition processes.

Following this, the teachers shared their concerns about the main goal of refugee education, which always shapes the perspective, and intention of practices. They identified the three most framing ones regarding refugee education and transition processes:

1) State: The focus lies on academic performance and outputs such as grades to succeed in international comparative studies such as PISA, „[which] has consistently shown that migrant students are at a disadvantage in European societies" (European Commission 2019). International studies measure students' performance and achievements in comparison to other nations and build one important source for policy-making. They also justify the segregated education of vulnerable students in general and refugee students in particular. That can be the reason for the significant over-representation of students with a refugee or migration background in secondary education focusing on vocational training rather than those with academic tracks (Subasi Singh 2020).
2) Teachers: The interviewees highlight missing concepts and contradicting perspectives in refugee education. They often feel left alone and unsupported by administrative and authorities (Bacakova & Closs 2013; European Commission, 2018: 55). Furthermore, the attitude and commitment of teachers determine the quality and sustainability of education and transitions (Cerna 2019). The teachers interviewed remark that commitment and engagement is one key to providing refugee education and transition processes.
3) Students: This perspective should be the most important one in refugee education and especially in transitions (Besic et al. 2020), but is less considered. The feeling of belonging plays an important role in participation. In European countries, it is strongly connected with language and implies disad-

> vantages for students with other first languages in monolingual school systems (European Commission 2019: 9; Dovigo et a. 2020: 12, 17, 51). Research shows that countries with more than one official language like Switzerland (Grin & Swob 2002), Luxembourg, or Northern Italy benefit from multilingualism. It needs "dynamic plurilingual pedagogies, which take into account the complex multilingualism of students to respond to the linguistically heterogeneous classroom of the twenty-first century and current and future social challenges, such as inclusion in migrant societies" (Panagiotopoulou & Rosen 2018: 406).

To conclude, education policy does not sufficiently consider refugee education and transitions at the international and national levels. There are no long-term strategies for refugee students (Dovigo et al. 2020: 15). Thus, especially in performance-orientated school systems, transitions are very difficult to shape and support for teachers.

5.2 Redundancy of refugee education in inclusive environments

In the UK, every child from five to 18 years has the right to education in the mainstream school system. In 2017, there were 118 schools implementing refugee education across the UK. Newly arrived students are directly accepted into mainstream schools (Dovigo 2020: 75). The inclusion of refugee students, called the Sanctuary Movement, results from a holistic approach that represents inclusive values and is based on the human right of sanctuary (Schools of Sanctuary 2022). While teachers from Austria, Denmark, and Norway report on missing goals and guidelines in refugee education and transitions, the Sanctuary Movement set up criteria for inclusive education. They present three key principles (Schools of Sanctuary 2022):

1) learning what it means to look for support in times of crisis
2) embedding and providing a safe and inclusive environment and
3) sharing the same values with the local community

Those principles demonstrate that inclusion is a process and participation is the focus (Florian 2014). No project-based good practices are depending on teachers' engagement. Rather, an established system represents inclusive values.

It is exactly what teachers in Austria, Denmark, and Norway lack. The interviewees shared their knowledge of available but not obligatory evaluation tools like the SWOT method or the WHO criteria. The Sanctuary Movement shows an existing framework with predefined values and norms. There is a self-assessment tool to evaluate the inclusiveness and the compre-

hensive implementation at a school. This entails a common frame of orientation for learning and teaching, based on a common understanding of inclusive education. It should be noted that transition into the English school system and society does occur for refugee children, but due to the unified school structure, there are no further transitions between different types of schools.

In summary, the EU refugee quota affects all five countries. Thus, people have been on the flight already and settling in having to leave again. Consequently, students with refugee backgrounds transition and enter new educational systems more than once. Nevertheless, the Sanctuary Movement in the UK shows a flexible response to the diversity of students regardless of background and ability. In contrast, countries such as Austria and Denmark, with their rigid education systems, have exclusively segregated measures with a focus on integration, and thus increase and complicate transitions.

6 Conclusion

Starting from the international right to equal and inclusive education for all students, the impact of policies shows that the implementation of education for all varies from segregation to inclusion across Europe. This qualitative cross-national research underlines the wide range of how refugee education and transition processes are anchored across the five participating countries Austria, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the UK.

In Austria, Denmark and Norway project-based good practices frame refugee education and transitions. It depends on schools and particularly committed teachers to which extent and in which quality refugee students are educated. The empirical findings agree with quantitative research results that teachers' attitudes and engagement shape (the quality of) teaching practices (Cerna 2019; Pin-ten, Cate & Glock 2019).

The outcomes underline that inclusive and refugee education depend on the stakeholders' perspective. In both cases, the state's and teachers' , as well as students' perspectives differ greatly from each other. There is a lack of standardized guidelines, which makes it difficult to implement inclusive education comprehensively. Teachers report on the struggle with missing normative frameworks against which they could direct their practices. Teachers evaluate their project-based good practices individually. Even if research and stakeholders indicate that participation would be key for successful inclusion and transition, the focus lies on academic performance and grades.

Transitions are not preventable when being on the flight and often hinder but also enable access to (quality) education. This contribution shows that refugee students face artificially constructed transitions in countries like Austria or Denmark. For example, the transition from a preparatory class to a

mainstream school counts as a barrier to participating. In Austria, the school system divides students into vocational and academic tracks according to their academic performance. The transition between the tracks is highly difficult, especially for vulnerable students. Another form of transition occurs in Austria with moving between the federal states. It forces a transition in education because it is a matter of each federal state to implement (inclusive) education.

In Iceland, the system provides integrative opportunities for refugee students. Transitions are reduced because students are directly accepted into mainstream schools. National policies were adapted toward the international standard of inclusive education. Nevertheless, policies lack long-term strategies for students at risk.

In the UK, surprisingly, an inclusive approach is implemented in many schools. In addition to adequate policies following the idea of inclusive education, an ethos of humanity and inclusion plays a central role, which reflects the commitment of the entire society. These aspects correspond to a comprehensive implementation that teachers do not find, or only to a limited extent in Austria, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland.

Concluding, the school systems across Europe are in a transition process from special/refugee education to inclusive education. National policies hinder the implementation of inclusive approaches. The UK shows the impact of standardized policies on inclusive education. Additionally, a shared ethos is provided to implement and direct inclusive education. Thus, RE is obsolete at the same time inclusive values are practiced in schools and society.

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Before, in or after transition? On becoming a ‘mainstream student’ in Germany and Italy in the context of new migration

Fenna tom Dieck and Lisa Rosen

1 Introduction

School education is broadly discussed as an important factor for the wellbeing and inclusion of refugee children and adolescents (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce 2019: 27). Schools are often the first place where they come into daily contact with peers in the country of arrival. For all students, school is a significant place for socialisation that structures everyday life. At the same time, refugee children and youth may face various forms of othering (Wiseman & Galegher 2019: 79), institutional discrimination (Gomolla 2017) and the hidden curriculum of racism (Auernheimer 2007: 91) in schools, the effects of which can become particularly apparent in transitional situations (Gomolla & Radtke 2009: 126). In the following, we will discuss aspects that are relevant not only for refugee students but also for newly arrived students from other migration contexts (for a discussion of the terminology see Ullucci 2020 and Rosen & tom Dieck 2022: 228) – since both face the challenges of entering a different national education system. We consider that transitions, especially those towards the role of ‘mainstream’ (Bunar & Juvonen 2021) respectively ‘regular’ (Crul, Lelie, Biner, Bunar, Keskiner, Kokkali, Schneider & Shuayb 2019) students, are significant to newly arrived students’ educational and participation opportunities. At the same time, additional factors can be significantly relevant for refugee students in particular (Korntheuer 2016: 393), including structural barriers and specific addressings with regard to victimisation or exoticisation (Rosen & tom Dieck 2022).

Previous research in German-speaking countries has mainly focused on institutionally structured transitions between different phases of schooling for newly arrived students. In this article, we explore interdependencies between institutional structures and individual practices contributing to the thematization of transitions (Wanka, Rieger-Ladich, Stauber & Walther 2019: 20). Starting from reconstructive studies (see Section 2), we focus on the institutional context in Germany and later on in Italy, drawing on data from two different qualitative research projects on school education for newly arrived

students from an international comparative perspective. Both countries are considered immigration countries, especially in the wake of recent forced migration (Dovigo 2020: 7). Their educational systems differ in some key respects: While the German school system has a long history of separate education for students with special needs and those without German language skills, the Italian education system has been designed inclusively since the 1970s (Allemann-Ghionda 2009: 141). Consequently, newly arrived students can be considered at least formally integrated into Italian mainstream classes, whereas in Germany they often only intermittently participate in mainstream classes.

To explore how transitions of newly arrived students are negotiated in these contrasting contexts, we carried out a secondary analysis of ethnographic data following Charmaz's (2014) constructivist revision of the Grounded Theory (see Section 3). Based on the assumption that transitions are to be understood as being multiagential and multisited (Wanka 2019: 285), we selected two sequences from everyday school life that are thematical (see Section 4): first, a conversation between a teacher and newly arrived students about their tasks in mainstream class and, second, a statement from a teacher about students participation there.

2 State of research on school transitions for newly arrived students in Germany

In theoretical contributions and empirical research on the education of newly arrived and refugee students in Germany, there is a strong focus on so-called welcome and preparatory classes. This separative form of schooling reflects – from our point of view – an understanding of transition in which newly arrived students should generally be prepared for attending mainstream class for two years before they officially transition. Despite the existence of other principles for schooling, the separative form prevails (Maaz & Jäger-Biela 2016: 24), which is criticized in reconstructive studies from Germany and in the international discussion at the European level as well (Crul et al. 2019: 9). In particular, scholars question whether the transition is actually facilitated by separative schooling or rather made more difficult: Students lack contact with autochthonous peers and receive little or no subject-oriented instruction (Karakayali 2020: 125), and furthermore, they are affected by othering processes (ibid: 127) that render their belonging precarious.

In contrast to this relatively elaborated field of research, there are thus far only a few publications that explicitly address school models based on a different understanding of transition in which the students attend mainstream

classes in addition to language support measures. Some of the studies focus specifically on transitions: For example, one survey offers insights into the perspectives of ten teachers from different federal states in Germany on the processes of transition to mainstream classes. The teachers closely link successful transitions with the topos of arrival and address various criteria for this. They consider integration within the peer group of the mainstream class and the establishment of friendships to be relevant factors for wellbeing (von Dewitz & Bredthauer 2020: 433). Furthermore, academic achievement, especially regarding the future acquisition of school-leaving certificates, the existence of support opportunities for German language acquisition and subject teaching and the establishment of social relationships, are discussed as an important factor for successful transitions (ibid: 434). In our ethnographic research, we observed that the criteria for a full transition to the mainstream class after two years in the language support programme remained unclear even for the teachers involved (Rosen & tom Dieck 2022: 224): The information provided about transitioning was partially contradictory, and relevant regulations and agreements were described as under development. Karakayali made comparable observations at an elementary school in Berlin (2020: 125). Another ethnographic study shows that students and teachers consider different criteria for transition relevant: While one interviewed student attributed the transition to his progress in learning German, the teacher referred to the length of stay in the preparatory class (Plöger & Barakos 2021: 13). Case studies conducted by master's students in language support measures in two upper secondary schools ('Gymnasium') in Berlin show that in these schools, academic performance assessments, especially of German language proficiency, were used as criteria for deciding whether newly arrived students were allowed to stay at the 'Gymnasium' or downgraded to lower secondary schools when transitioning to the mainstream class (Brüggemann & Nikolai 2016: 5). With regard to the same type of school, we observed in our ethnographic research that some students remained in language support groups for more than two years because teachers assumed that they were unable to cope with mainstream classes due to (ascribed) trauma. In this context, a process of victimization was reconstructed through which all newly arrived students were addressed as objects in need of support to be able to fully participate in mainstream education in the future (Rosen & tom Dieck 2022: 222).

To empirically differentiate these exploratory findings on refugee education within partially integrative schooling in Germany, we pursue in the following an analysis comparing partially integrative and integrative school models that offer joint instruction in mainstream classes. We reconstruct to what extent different understandings of transitional processes can be found in these diverse settings in Germany and Italy and therefore focus on a pedagogical practice that was observed in both contexts, the nongrading of exams of newly arrived students.

3 Research process: Methodological approach, methods and data

To explore how transitions of newly arrived students are negotiated and thematised at the level of interaction in two contrasting school organisational contexts, we conducted a secondary analysis of ethnographic data for this paper, including an international comparative perspective. Both the secondary analysis and the international comparison are the result of the simultaneity of two thematically and methodologically close ethnographic research projects on school education in the context of new and forced migration: first, a preliminary study in Germany of the then-planned European research project "EDULIfe – Education as a lever for integration for refugee and migrant children" and second, Fenna tom Diecks's internationally comparative dissertation. She conducted the participant observations for both projects. This simultaneity enabled us to build on a joint analysis of practices in partially integrative schooling in Germany (Rosen & tom Dieck 2022) and to compare them with corresponding practices in integrative schooling in Italy. The identification of a common phenomenon that we operationalized as the tertium comparationis (Liebeskind 2012: 327) is in part already a result of the circular research process moving between two research projects and not a presupposition that we made in advance and imposed on the data – this would contradict the principle of openness and data-based reasoning in Grounded Theory research processes. Focusing on this tertium comparationis linking the two contrasting fields of refugee education, we transformed and concretised our initial research interest into the following research question: What teachers' performance expectations towards newly arrived students can be reconstructed, and which understandings of transitions are expressed therein?

In our analyses, we follow Charmaz's constructivist revision of Grounded Theory (2014). We consider Grounded Theory to be very suitable for the context of international comparative research. Its analytical strategy of coding promotes the comparison of incidents and phenomena instead of national contexts (Falkenberg 2018: 122) since they can also be applied cross-contextually (Liebeskind 2012: 334). Charmaz's constructivist approach seems particularly compatible with the challenges of comparative research in contexts shaped by inequalities with regard to (forced) migration (Migliarini 2017: 184), as it offers possibilities to reflect on power and dependency relations as well as one's own locality (Liebeskind 2012: 330) and aims at a sensitivity towards reification (Kertzer 2017).

Drawing on these methodological underpinnings, we do not anticipate a causal relation between the respective state in which our research fields are situated and the practices that we observed (Falkenberg 2018: 108). Further-

more, we do not assume that our results might be representative or generalizable for all German or all Italian schools or that institutional structures would be the only determinant of what happens in the classroom (Rademacher 2013: 71). However, we consider educational policies in both countries structures school organisation and thus opens up space for negotiating transitions in different ways. We have therefore compiled an overview of the partly contrasting framework of school education for refugee and newly arrived students in Germany and Italy (see Table 1). On the one hand, this should methodically substantiate the comparison and, on the other hand, it should serve as an overview field description.

Table 1. School education for newly arrived students in Germany and Italy

Italy	**Germany**
Structure of the educational system	
Nationally uniform, centralized structure (Kelly, Hofbauer & Gross 2021)	Federally structured (Kelly, Hofbauer & Gross 2021)
Abolition of special needs schools and differential classes in the seventies (Milione 2011)	Separate schools for students with special needs; a current drive exists to expand structures of common instruction and inclusive education (Köpfer, Powel I& Zahnd 2021)
Access to schools	
No separate schooling (Dovigo 2020)	Different principles of schooling, differing primarily in terms of the ratio of participation in regular classes (Terhart & von Dewitz 2018)
Start of compulsory schooling is not dependent on residence status but on the place of stay (Dovigo 2020)	Start of compulsory schooling differs from state to state, commonly depending on residence status and place of stay (Vogel & Stock 2018)
School education in practice	
Right to additional language support exists, but is not always implemented in practice (Grigt 2018)	The structure and amount of language support depend on the principle of schooling (Terhart & von Dewitz 2018)
Development of individualized educational plans and objectives (Piani Didattici Personalizzati) for every newly arrived student (Dovigo 2020)	Often no grading is used in the first two years of schooling (Emmerich, Hormel & Jording 2017)

In both fields, participant observations were carried out in the first half of 2018 by Fenna tom Dieck. In Germany, participant observation took place once per week for four consecutive hours at an upper secondary school (‘Gymnasium’) in lessons of the language support measures for 10- to 14-year-old newly arrived students, resulting in approximately 28 hours of field

stay. In Italy, participant observations were conducted over a period of three weeks in the fifth year of a primary school attended by 10- to 11-year-old students. The ethnographer spent approximately four consecutive hours daily in a mainstream class where two of the students were newly arrived, one of them in the context of forced migration. The field stays in both settings included extracurricular settings such as breaks and excursions. An important part of the fieldwork was conducting ethnographic interviews and "friendly conversations" (Spradley 1979: 55), also known as unstructured interviews (Fedyuk & Zentai 2018: 173) with teachers and students. The second sequence presented in the following section is part of such data.

4 Empirical findings

In this chapter, we present an analysis of two sequences from a German and an Italian school in which teachers refer to the attendance of newly arrived students in mainstream classes: First, a conversation between a language support teacher and her students about their tasks in mainstream class and second, a statement from a teacher about the student's participation there. We selected these sequences in the course of focused coding (Charmaz 2014: 138) to elaborate the thematization of performance expectations towards newly arrived students as a common key topic. In identifying themes, we aimed to reconstruct teachers' perspectives on students' transitions as pending, in progress or (almost) completed (each coded as "before, in or after transition?"). All names appearing in the observation protocols and in the analysis are pseudonyms.

4.1 "You won't get a mark anyway": Observations from partially integrative schooling in Germany

The following sequence taken from an observation protocol was preceded by two teachers from the language support group announcing an excursion to the students.

> "Ms. Meier, can I tell my class teacher?" is Masud's first reaction. Many other students agree: "I also want to tell my teacher that I'm not coming" and "We are supposed to write an essay today". They are told that the class teachers have been informed about the trip and that it had also been approved by the headmaster. Bitah then says: "Ms. Meier, I'm taking a math test today!" Ms. Meier looks at her, astonished: "Do you want to stay at school? It is up to you; you never really

> take part in exams anyway". Bitah then seems to think twice and looks doubtful. Ms. Meier tries to make eye contact and then says, "Think about it, you won't get a mark anyway". Bitah continues to look doubtful, now trying to make eye contact with the student sitting next to her." (observation protocol from May 2, 2018)

The students' first reaction to the teachers' announcement is to raise the issue of obligations in mainstream class: They want to inform their teachers there that they will not be attending. For Bitah in particular, a tension seems to arise: Taking part in an exam in mainstream class seems to be more important to her than an excursion with the language support group, indicating her sense of belonging to the first. Bitah's self-positioning as a student who is already in mainstream class or about to completely transition there does not seem to match the view of the language support teacher. She puts Bitah's view into perspective and casts it into doubt by reacting astonished. Ms. Meier thus demonstrates that the exam, which is part of the practices belonging to the "student job" (Breidenstein 2006), does not apply to Bitah. In addition, the language support teacher points out that her participation in exams differs from that of mainstream students in one key aspect: Bitah is not subjected to the usual performance expectations, which is framed as a temporally persistent ("never") deviation from the norm. Even if the teachers try to prevent Bitah from possible experiences of failure, this well-intended unequal treatment leads to the assignment of a special status, marking her as a nonmainstream class student and a student before transition.

In the next moment, Ms. Meier asks Bitah to decide for herself whether to participate in the test or the excursion ("It is up to you"). This empowerment is fragile, however, as the teacher immediately presents arguments against the first option and asks her to weigh them ("Think about it"). Bitah's attention is then drawn to the fact that she is not (yet) a student in mainstream class but still in transition because, unlike them, she does not (yet) receive a grade. In accordance with the Grounded Theory principle of a circular research process, we specifically looked for performance feedback after learning that newly arrived students' exams were not assessed in regular class even if they took part. However, throughout the entire ethnographic fieldwork, the learning progress of the students in the language support measures was not documented–so a routine that applies to mainstream students was not used here.

Reconstructing the entire conversation above as a negotiation of the student's transition, it becomes clear that the teacher and the student express different stances towards transition: Bitah seems to nonverbally express a skepticism at the end that indicates a prioritization of mainstream classes. We reconstructed such preferences in several practices of newly arrived students during language support lessons, for instance talking about mainstream teachers and subjects or even studying for exams in mainstream class during these lessons. The prioritization of the mainstream classes by newly arrived

students has also been documented in other qualitative studies: Refugee students expressed in interviews that they did not feel part of the 'school collective' until they had fully transitioned into mainstream classes (Nilsson & Axelsson 2013: 151). In addition, they show high educational aspirations and achievement orientations (Barth & Guerrero Meneses 2012: 6) as well as a strong "spirit of going to school" (Korntheuer 2016: 300). Against this background, it can be interpreted that Bitah acts as if she rather belongs to the mainstream class and has thus almost completed the transition, while her language support teacher insists on her (pre)transition status.

4.2 "But the important thing is that they take part in what is happening in class": Observations from integrative schooling in Italy

The following sequence is taken from a conversation between the special needs teacher Ms. Mela, the class teacher, and the ethnographer, which the teachers started by talking about two newly arrived students and a student with special educational needs.

> Ms. Mela continues, addressing me: "[…] Everyone has their individual weaknesses, but the important thing is that they take part in what is happening in class. That they work on topics that others are working on, that they don't feel excluded. For example, in grammar exercises we do not do the congiuntivo (subjunctive) with Karim, that would still be too difficult for him, but we do also conjugate verbs. In math, in the social sciences, they do the same, but in a scaled-down way. They also do the exams when the others do them. They are not graded yet, but it is important for them to do something then too. Maybe we cut a few details, which probably the rest of the class doesn't always understand either". (observation protocol from 23rd of March 2018).

At the beginning of this sequence, the teacher draws attention to the heterogeneity of the students' support needs by saying that everyone has their own individual "weaknesses". In doing so, she groups the two newcomers and the student with special educational needs as equals and highlights commonalities. Ms. Mela expresses what she considers to be particularly important: "that they take part in what is happening in class". This reflects an understanding of inclusion and participation that goes beyond the physical copresence of all students: The teacher explicitly states that the students should participate in what is on the agenda in class and concretizes as working on the same topic. The intended consequence is that students "don't feel excluded". Ms. Mela apparently sees "learning on a common object" (Feuser 2018: 15) as a didactic approach that enables participation within a heterogeneous

group. An entitlement to this participation seems to apply to all students, since she does not tie it to a specific point in time or an (institutional) transition that they have to pass first.

The teacher concretizes her understanding of working on the same topic with an example from the current lesson. She explains that while the rest of the class, including another newly arrived student from Romania, works on the "congiuntivo", a grammatical mood that is the current topic in Italian lessons, Karim, a student who migrated from Algeria a few months ago, studies the conjugation of verbs in the present tense. The common object is therefore the conjugation of verbs. Ms. Melas's reasoning not to "do the congiuntivo" with Karim because in her opinion, it is "still too difficult" for him indicates that she sees Karim's academic performance as dynamic: She seems to regard the differences as temporary and assumes that Karim's proficiency level will converge with that of the autochthonous students in the future. In the next sentence, Ms. Mela reports a similar approach for other school subjects, aiming to enable participation by breaking down the subject matter.

She then talks about exams, explaining that newcomers take them even though they are not being graded "yet". In the nongrading of exams, there is a direct parallel to the sequence from the German school presented above. In contrast, Ms. Mela indicates the provisional character of this unequal treatment by saying "yet". In addition, she refers to the significance of participation in exams for the newly arrived students. Thus, unlike the teacher in the German school, she does not draw the conclusion that participation in exams is unnecessary as long as the students are not graded but, to the contrary, emphasizes the importance of them taking part. This is in line with other observation protocols from this school where a subject teacher asks the newly arrived students to take participation in oral assessments seriously.

With her final statement that certain details are being left out but that those might not be understood by the rest of the class as well, she establishes a similarity between the competencies of the newly arrived students and further students and levels the (time-limited) achievement gap. The teacher thus marks that the students are still in transition though they participate in mainstream classes. Presumably for her as a teacher, newly arrived students have completed the transition when the need for individualized instruction is waived. At the same time, Ms. Melas statement that even regular students are not always able to "understand" all the content of regular instruction indicates that she does not draw a clear line between the students and that transitions are therefore to be understood as fluid. The focus here is hence on the commonalities of the students as well as on the work on common objects in learning. In particular, successful transitions of newly arrived students are taken for granted.

During participant observations in the class, it was repeatedly observed that subject teachers, in accordance with the special needs teacher, spontaneously decided to what extent newly arrived students should work on tasks or how tasks could be adapted to meet individual learning levels. The newly arrived students themselves were not involved in these considerations except in individual cases, but similar to the conditions observed in the German school, a strong orientation towards class activities and the tasks of the mainstream class was observed on the part of the students, themselves.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Similar to ethnographic research in Norwegian schools (Hilt 2017: 594), our analysis reveals that newly arrived students are addressed differently from mainstream students in terms of performance expectations. If we understand a transition in the context of refugee education as a transformation towards the role of a mainstream student, this has not happened yet in either case. Instead, othering (Said 1981) takes place, especially with regard to the suspension of grading. Nongrading policies have also been criticized in the context of school education for newcomers in Austria (Khakpour 2016: 163) and for language support measures at primary schools in Berlin (Karakayali, zur Nieden, Kahveci, Groß, Heller & Güleryüz 2016: 4). While we would agree with this problematization for the case observed in Germany, we come to a slightly different assessment of the same phenomenon in the case from Italy. A main difference is that the observed teachers in Italy insist on students taking part in the exams during transition and consider this to be relevant for participation. The students are thus already being prepared for the time after transition and only receive grades later. In contrast, the teacher from the German case seems to consider participation in a test to be necessary only when newly arrived students receive grades, i.e., when the formal transition to mainstream classes has been completed. This expresses a rather static understanding of transition, which is linked to the institutionally defined full participation of newly arrived students in mainstream classes after the first two years of their school attendance. Intrapersonal transformation and adaptation processes in this understanding seem to be located mainly within the timeframe for preparatory class, when newly arrived students' participation in mainstream class is still preliminary. In other words, the students learn everything they need to become a mainstream student in preparatory class and transition afterwards. Before this transition, hourly participation in regular classes happens in the position of being 'other' students for which different rules apply. This fact, as well as presumably the absence of language support teachers in mainstream classes in the partially integrative model,

leads to little room for negotiation of transition processes and their individualised structuring. This is in line with results from research in Swedish schools where students reported that they felt like their educational career was "on hold" (Nilsson & Axelsson 2013: 151) until they reached the mainstream system. In contrast, the teachers in the integration principle apparently have a dynamic understanding of transition within which, as repeatedly observed, newly arrived students' possibilities for agency and participation were negotiated according to the occasion. Based on the analyses presented here, we hypothesize that newly arrived and thus also refugee students in the integrative context seem to be understood as already in transition to regular student status from the beginning of their school attendance and that transformation processes are located within participation in mainstream class.

In conclusion, we would like to discuss possible explanations for teachers' different perspectives on transitions in the two ethnographic fields. First, this could be due to the different principles of schooling. While the partial integration principle seems to be closely linked to the institutionally determined and time-restricted transition to mainstream class after two years and thus places transition still in the future for the students in the first sequence, in the integration principle, transition is not linked to a change in school class. Analyses of further observations suggest that an institutionally anchored indicator of transition could be the end of differentiated instruction for newly arrived students within mainstream classes. Second, the different understandings could be rooted in the teachers' different professions. While Ms. Meier teaches the students only in German as an additional language and is not present in mainstream classes, in the Italian case, we can see a special needs teacher who is familiar with target-differentiated teaching and is involved in the development of individualized educational plans for newly arrived students in all subjects. Finally, we assume that the separation of language support and subject lessons also influences teachers' understandings of transitions. The newly arrived students in the integration principle are constantly present in mainstream classes, and their performance and development of competencies in the subject lessons can thus be continuously monitored by Ms. Mela. In the German case, in contrast, Ms. Meier only sees the newly arrived students during language support lessons; information about transformation practices in the subject lessons is merely available to her from third parties.

In this article, we have focused on teachers' expectations for the academic performance of newly arrived students and thus on their perspectives but not on students' views on transitions, which is a clear limitation. In both ethnographic fields newly arrived students seemed to be very aware of what is going on in mainstream classes and of performance requirements there, which indicates that they might consider themselves as in transition or perhaps as already having made the transition. Therefore, focusing on students'

perception of transitions is a central desideratum of migration research in educational science. Further research could address another limitation of our study: There is a strong focus on school performance, possibly due to the focus on teachers' statements. Transition processes in the context of social inclusion and peer relations should thus be considered in the future.

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Engaging parents of refugee backgrounds in their children's education: Insights from Australia

Sharon Wagner and Loshini Naidoo

1 Introduction

This chapter contributes to the current discourse on refugees and educational transition, with a specific focus on the engagement by parents from refugee backgrounds in their secondary school-aged children's learning after resettlement in Australia. Schools have been depicted as places 'where refugees are given a second chance' (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] 2019). In contrast to the hardships and unpredictability associated with their refugee experience, it has been contended that resettling in Australia and engaging in formal schooling can 'open doors' of opportunity for children from refugee backgrounds (Matthews 2008, p.35). However, settling into a new school in a different country can also be a challenging process, impacting not only the young person but also their parents and educators as they support the child in this educational transition.

In educational contexts, 'transition' usually refers to change, such as the change of context that students from refugee backgrounds experience after resettlement in Australia. In this chapter, the term 'transition' incorporates the concept of 'trans-locational spaces' (Anthias 2008) highlighting that migration transforms social places. For example, as families from refugee backgrounds settle into a new educational context after moving to Australia, this sets in motion a process of transition for other members of the school community including educators, other parents, and their children, as they adjust to the impact of having new members in their school community. To develop a deeper understanding of this transitional process, this chapter explores factors influencing how parents from refugee backgrounds and Australian educators support these young people along their learning journey.

With the number of refugees and displaced people worldwide continuing to increase, it is likely that there will be a corresponding increase in the number of students from refugee backgrounds in Australian schools. Although the vast majority (85%) of the 26.6 million refugees who were forced to flee their country due to a 'well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, reli-

gion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group' (Convention of 1951, Article 1A[2]) were hosted by developing regions (UNHCR 2021), Australia allocated 13,750 places to the Refugee and Humanitarian Program for 2021-22 (Department of Home Affairs 2021). This included approximately 1800 young people aged between twelve and seventeen permanently resettled in Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian program in 2019-20 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021). Regardless of these young people's previous educational experiences, it is argued in this chapter that parents from refugee backgrounds can play a vital role in supporting their children through this transitional process.

Concern about educational disadvantage and exclusion, experienced for instance by refugee background students after resettlement, has stimulated increased emphasis in government policy and in research on the value of parents engaging in their children's learning as one way to foster social cohesion in educational domains. This is evident, for instance, in the choice of 'engaging parents in education' as one of the four pillars for the Australian Government's *Students First* reform agenda for schools (Department of Education and Training 2015). Researchers have also linked parental engagement to its potential of 'narrowing the achievement gap' (Goodall 2017, p.i), regardless of the socio-cultural, economic, or linguistic background of the family (Harris & Goodall 2007; Jung & Zhang 2016). For example, Jung and Zhang (2016) argue that parental support enables children from refugee backgrounds to have a 'positive relationship with academic achievement and performance in school' (p.333).

However, research has tended to focus on barriers experienced by refugee background parents that may limit their engagement in their children's learning after resettlement (see for example Miller, Ziaian & Esterman 2018). While not ignoring the challenges experienced by the parents from refugee backgrounds who participated in our studies, such as a lack of familiarity with Australian cultural norms and with school expectations about the role of parents; this chapter argues that both parents from refugee backgrounds ***and*** educators in Australian schools can learn from each other.

In contrast to the predominant focus in parental engagement research on support provided by parents of primary school-aged children (Miller, Ziaian & Esterman 2018), there has been less emphasis on factors influencing how parents can engage with their teenage children's learning. This chapter, therefore, draws on perceptions held by teachers and refugee background parents from Australian public secondary schools to critically explore the engagement by parents of refugee backgrounds in their teenage children's learning after resettlement, and whether changing demographics within the participating school communities have an impact on school practices and strategies relating to parental engagement.

This chapter initially provides a brief overview of the methods used to collect and analyse the data drawn from two qualitative studies. Thereafter, a rationale is provided for the use of an Intersectional lens to frame the findings from these two studies. The primary focus of this chapter is to extend current understandings about transitional processes in the context of engagement by parents from refugee backgrounds in their secondary school-aged children's learning after resettlement in Australia.

2 Methodology

The two authors separately conducted the two qualitative studies from which data has been drawn for this chapter. Although conducted six years apart in different Australian states, both studies adopted a case study approach to explore how parental engagement strategies and practices were perceived and experienced by the participating refugee background parents and the teachers from the participating schools, thereby offering differing socio-historical insights into parental engagement experiences. This section initially explains how interpreters were used in both studies, then focuses on the design and methods adopted in each study, before providing details about the analysis of data collected from the two studies.

2.1 Use of interpreters

In both studies, refugee background parents were able to access the services of an interpreter when participating in focus groups or interviews. Although the use of interpreters could be regarded as a limitation because their interpretations were often captured in the transcription process rather than the actual voices of the participants (Creswell & Creswell 2018), access to interpreting enabled the participating parents to share their perceptions which would not have been possible if the studies had been conducted in English. A summary of interview and focus group transcripts was prepared thus enabling participants to verify accuracy (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

2.2 Study one

The first study draws on data from Wagner's (2022) current doctoral research focusing on parental engagement, and explores the perceptions held by refugee background parents and EAL (English as an Additional Language) teachers from four Tasmanian public secondary schools. This research adopted a qualitative collective case study design (Stake 2008), enabling an examination of the differences within and between the four 'cases' (participating schools) by focusing on the participants' perceptions and experiences of the 'phenomenon' (parental engagement), including the parental engagement practices and strategies adopted at the four participating schools.

Prior to commencement of this study, ethics approval was sought and granted by Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (WSU HREC) (approval number H13069) and the Tasmanian Department of Education to enable access to teachers and parents from the participating public secondary schools. Recruitment of educators for participation in this qualitative case study was co-ordinated by the principals from the four participating schools who requested that EAL teachers be interviewed, rather than the proposed focus group with six staff members from each school. Assisted by a Hazara community leader and an accredited interpreter, Wagner recruited ten parents for participation in her study, based on the study's selection criteria, namely all parents were from an Afghan ethnic minority (Hazara) who had resettled under the Humanitarian Entrant visa in the last five years, with children attending one of the four participating Tasmanian public secondary schools.

As participants' experiences and behaviours are 'shaped by the context of their lives' (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2015, p. 9), Wagner (2022) chose semi-structured interviews to elicit the participants' insights about parental engagement, specifically within the Tasmanian educational context. All interviews were held between August and October 2019 and lasted between 25 and 60 minutes. Wagner (2022) conducted individual interviews with ten Hazara parents in their homes, that is three parents each from schools TAS1, TAS2, and TAS3, plus one parent from TAS4 school (large numbers of Hazara families left southern Tasmania at the time of the interviews, resulting in the availability of only one TAS4 school parent). Wagner (2022) also interviewed a total of five educators at their respective schools, with two educators from TAS3 school being jointly interviewed, while individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three other participating educators.

2.3 Study two

Data was also drawn from Naidoo's (2016) qualitative ethnographic case study on engagement by parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (hereinafter referred to as Study 2), which was part of an Australia-wide qualitative field project funded by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth that also explored the engagement by parents from Aboriginal, and low-SES backgrounds, and parents of children with disabilities (Woodrow et al. 2016). This project aimed to establish a baseline for understanding engagement by parents from these four cohorts in their children's learning (Woodrow et al. 2016).

Prior to commencing this study, ethics approval was sought and granted by WSU HREC (approval number H11263), and the Department of Education in Victoria and New South Wales to enable access to teachers and parents from the participating schools. Recruitment was undertaken through the participating schools, with Naidoo (2016) responsible for any queries. Principals from each of the seven participating schools circulated project details to educators, and CALD parents were recruited through their connection with the schools.

Adopting a qualitative ethnographic approach, Naidoo (2016) conducted fourteen semi-structured focus groups (that is seven with participating CALD parents, and seven with teachers from high CALD enrolment schools located in New South Wales and Victoria) between October and December 2015, with each focus group lasting between 40 and 72 minutes. This provided the participants with an opportunity to discuss their views together, while Naidoo moderated the discussions (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

Whereas Naidoo's (2016) case study drew on the views of parents from CALD backgrounds generally, this current chapter focuses specifically on the perceptions held by parents from refugee backgrounds. It was therefore necessary to initially read all CALD parent focus group transcripts (Naidoo 2016) to extract data from the participating parents who self-identified as coming from a refugee background. Three participating parents (from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) with children attending a Victorian school (VIC1), and five parents (from Afghanistan, Iran and the 'Middle East') with children attending a New South Wales school (NSW1) self-identified as coming from a refugee background (that is a total of eight parents from two focus groups). Data was also extracted from the teacher focus group transcripts (Naidoo 2016) if teachers specifically referred to engagement by refugee background parents. Four educators each from two of the participating Victorian schools (VIC1, VIC2) and three of the participating New South Wales schools (NSW1, NSW2, NSW3) referred specifically to

engagement by refugee background parents (that is a total of twenty educators from five focus groups).

2.4 Analysis of data drawn from study one and two

Naidoo (2016) and Wagner (2022) ensured that their respective focus groups or interviews were recorded and transcribed. After data collection, they utilized thematic analysis methods to generate meaning from the collected data. Initially, data from interview or focus group transcripts were clustered into 'meaningful groups' (Leedy & Ormrod 2013, p.139), thus enabling the preparation of tentative categories. Using the constant comparative method (Charmaz 2014), these categories were refined, expanded, or deleted as necessary to better reflect the meaning of the data. Adopting this inductive approach to generate meaning from the participant responses, a case study was developed for the CALD background parent cohort (Naidoo 2016) and for each of the four participating schools (Wagner 2022).

For a combined analysis of data from the two studies, we initially read all transcripts from Study 1, and the extracted data from Study 2 specifically related to parents from refugee backgrounds. Thematic analysis methods (as described in the previous paragraph) were then used to identify recurring themes and patterns across the data.

Before exploring the two themes that emerged from the analysis of data collected from the two studies, the following section focuses on the way this research into the engagement by parents from refugee backgrounds is framed by Intersectionality.

3 Theoretical framework

In addition to a focus on Intersectionality as the theoretical framework in this chapter, this section details how the concept of 'trans-locational positionality' (Anthias 2001, 2008) extends intersectional understandings by emphasising 'wider social processes in a space and time framework' (Anthias 2008, p.16).

Coining the term 'intersectionality', Crenshaw (1989) drew attention to inequalities experienced by Black women due to their experiences of racial and gender discrimination, thus highlighting the inadequacy of constructing discrimination based on the experiences of 'relatively privileged members of oppressed groups' as the universal norm (Carastathis 2013, p.961). Central to intersectionality is the emphasis on treating people as whole persons with

multiple identities that are dynamic and shifting in relation to each other. This rejects the view that individuals possess one identity that is a static and essential trait (Delgado & Stefancic 2012). Therefore, intersectionality emphasises the interconnection between social categories, such as race, class, and gender, rather than treating social groups in isolation from each other (Anthias 2008). Typically, an individual's experiences of privilege and discrimination are facilitated by the unique positioning of their social categories in relation to the diverse forms of power operating within a socio-historical context (Anthias 2008).

Extending beyond a focus on the intersection of social categories, Anthias' (2001) concept of trans-locational positionality depicts difference and inequality as a set of processes rather than possessive characteristics of individuals. With a focus on location/dislocation and on positionality, thereby emphasising temporal and spatial dimensions; Anthias (2001) highlights that there are no pre-given outcomes when considering the boundaries and hierarchies in social life. Therefore, migration sets in motion a range of social processes, influencing the allocation of power and other resources. By focusing on both social position (as outcome) and social positioning (as process), Anthias (2008) emphasizes that positionality is 'the space at the intersection of structure' (social position) and 'agency' (social positioning) (p.15).

With an emphasis on exploring, from a parent engagement perspective, how migration transforms social spaces, an intersectional lens is used in this chapter to question why certain values and expectations are accepted as school norms, as well as how these norms influence the way that parents from refugee backgrounds and educators are positioned within the Australian public secondary school context.

4 Findings and discussion

This section explores two themes, namely the impact of linguistic and cultural/educational differences on parental engagement practices, that emerged from data collected from the two studies detailed in section 2 (Methodology). Rather than perceiving 'difference' from a deficit perspective, this chapter explores the processes set in motion by refugee settlement in Australia and how this transition influences parental engagement practices.

4.1 Impact of linguistic differences on parental engagement practices

Drawing on the perceptions held by participants from both studies, this section focuses on factors that influence the effectiveness of practices and strategies adopted by refugee background parents and educators when communicating with each other within an Australian public secondary school context.

4.1.1 Written communication

An over-reliance by schools on written forms of communication can limit the ability of parents who are not yet proficient in English to access school information. Although some of the participating educators from the New South Wales and Victorian schools expressed frustration that many refugee background parents failed to attend Parent-Teacher meetings, despite invitations having been sent to all families; it may be questioned whether all parents were aware of the meetings, or if only parents competent in English understood they had been invited. Corresponding to Guo's (2011) contention that teachers tend to use specialist educational language when communicating with parents, some of the participating Tasmanian educators raised concerns about school information being '*overwhelmingly long and heavy'* (TAS2 Educator) and '*full of jargon*' (TAS1 Educator). In addition, the increasing reliance on digital communication platforms to share school information may inadvertently disadvantage some parents, such as any refugee background parent without the linguistic, technological, and economic capacity to access online information (Baak et al. 2021).

If schools do not communicate in ways refugee background parents can understand, there may be a reliance on children who are more proficient in English to translate or interpret for them. For example, many of the participating refugee background parents referred to a dependence on their children to translate school documents. However, issues can arise if children are expected to act as a 'conduit of information' between teachers and parents (Crozier & Davies 2007, p.307). A reliance on children conveying school information for parents who are less proficient in English can, for instance, lead to additional transition issues for the family after settlement, such as parental authority being challenged, thereby blurring the roles between the parent and child (Tran & Hodgson 2015), or as one educator explained, children '*decide what's important … kids take charge, not the parents'* (TAS2 Educator). Likewise, some of the participating parents and educators expressed concern that parents may receive incorrect messages, especially if the child is in trouble at school. This corresponds to Hamilton's (2013) warning

that parents may be 'oblivious to what information they fail to receive' (p.308) if a child filters school information.

4.1.2 Parental participation in school events

Parent-teacher meetings tend to be the primary opportunity in Australian schools for educators and parents to meet at the school to discuss student progress. Therefore, it is clearly concerning if there is generally a low attendance rate at these meetings by refugee background parents, as indicated by educators from the participating Victorian and New South Wales schools. Although non-attendance at school events may be perceived as indicative of a parent's lack of interest (Cureton 2020), some of the participating refugee background parents from these schools suggested that rather than a brief talk with the teachers at Parent-Teacher meetings, they would prefer events targeted specifically to help them in supporting their children's learning, such as workshops with a focus on engaging with homework content or learning English and computer skills.

Some of the participating school practices reflect a tendency to categorize refugee background parents together with other CALD parents as if they were a homogenous group (Azerdogan 2019), thereby disregarding intragroup differences such as differences in class, gender, and educational background. For example, one educator explained that most refugee background parents in his school do not yet have '*the English language skills*' (TAS3 Educator) to attend mainstream Parent-Teacher meetings conducted in English with their child's subject teachers. All participating refugee background parents from Study 1 therefore attend what was referred to as an EAL Parent-Teacher meeting, where the EAL teacher explains school information and an interpreter provides an overview of the child's report. However, as one parent explained '*our children don't have only one teacher . . . so it would be good if we could have meetings with every one of these teachers*' (TAS1 Parent). Whereas some of the participating refugee parents felt their inability to speak English limited their opportunities to speak with their child's subject teachers, some parents in the school community from CALD backgrounds may choose to financially compensate for their English 'deficit' by hiring an interpreter to gain access to school staff. Likewise, Delgado and Stefancic (2012) contend that the way social categories, such as a parents' linguistic identity and economic status intertwine 'determines who has power, voice, and representation and who does not' (p.61) in the school community.

The range of available support services for refugee background parents with children in Australian schools is also influenced by government resettlement policies. Although it is likely that different services, such as interpreting services, are available in major Australian cities where most refugee

background families are resettled (Piper 2017), it may not be financially viable to offer a comparable range of support services in regional schools if there are only small numbers of students from different language backgrounds – at least not until more families are resettled in the same location. As this can result in inequities in service provision based on where refugee background families are resettled and which schools their children attend, further investigation into the impact of government resettlement policies is warranted.

4.2 Impact of cultural/educational background differences on parental engagement practices

This section explores how previous educational experiences shaped by socio-cultural norms and expectations can influence current parent engagement practices.

4.2.1 Background differences

Differences in previous educational opportunities can influence how refugee background parents engage in their child's learning after settlement in Australia (Bitew & Ferguson 2010). Some of the participating parents felt that their own lack of education limited their ability to support their children's learning. For instance, one father explained: '*You can only help your children if you know what they are learning, . . . but if you haven't learnt it yourself, you can't really help them with their studies'* (TAS2 Parent). Conversely, other parents who were able to draw on previous knowledge to support their children with homework by using their home language described feeling uncomfortable when meeting their child's teachers at school because of their inability to express themselves in English.

Prior educational experiences shape perceptions held by parents and teachers about their roles and expected behaviour within the school context (Antony-Newman 2019). For example, some of the participating parents constructed teachers as the experts in the educational field, and they therefore felt reticent to ask questions in case it appeared they were doubting the teacher's expertise. Other parents did not want to offend the teacher and were concerned that their comments may have a negative impact on their child's classroom experience. In contrast, some of the participating educators indirectly acknowledged their role as educational experts through references to their provision of information and support because of refugee background

parents' low educational qualifications, lack of knowledge about the Australian school context, and/or inability to communicate fluently in English.

Even though refugee background parents may hold high aspirations for their children's educational success (Bromley & Yazdanpanah 2021), they may have no prior knowledge of the Australian school system, such as the expectation of active involvement by parents in their child's education. Although one participating educator explained that '*parents … might feel disempowered*' by a different educational system including the expectation of an '*active*' role '*in their child's learning'* (VIC1 Educator), another educator emphasised the need of '*active parenting'* (TAS3 Educator), including the benefits for the child of parent-initiated contact with the school. However, the assumption that all parents can equally advocate on behalf of their child ignores how, for instance, cultural, linguistic, and educational factors differentially position parents within the school community (Kendall & Puttick 2020).

Expectations about the extent to which parents participate in their child's school are shaped by socio-cultural norms, that are changeable over time and in different contexts. For example, the perception that parents are only 'engaged' if they adopt specific actions and behaviours (Kendall & Puttick 2020) can lead to the assumption that refugee background parents are 'uninvolved' unless they adopt the behavioural norms of their Australian school community. This may overlook 'invisible' strategies refugee background parents use to support their children's learning in the home context (Azerdogan 2019). For instance, many of the participating parents emphasised the need for a positive and encouraging family environment where the importance of education was prioritized, such as by limiting household tasks so that their children can focus on studying. Many of the participating refugee background parents also stressed the importance of helping their children learn to be respectful and well-behaved, or as one parent explained, '*Even if you know English or non-English, you have to teach them how to behave and how to share with other people'* (NSW3 Parent). Some of the parents suggested that appropriate behaviour at home can transfer to the school context, thus enabling their child to concentrate and take advantage of future educational opportunities.

4.2.2 Mutual understanding

It has been argued that when parents and teachers come from different cultural backgrounds, they need to be willing to 'negotiate across cultural divides' (Naidoo 2016, p.57), so that through sharing information they can build a knowledge of each other and of the child (Hamilton 2013). Some of the participating parents expressed a desire for a two-way exchange of information,

as exemplified by the following response: '*the teachers at school need to be aware of what's going on at home, and we need to be aware of what's going on at school'* (TAS2 Parent). Similarly, one of the educators commented:

> *... it's understanding the aspirations of our community and restructuring our commitments as a school to meet the changing context of our community. So, we need to be adaptable. We need to be as a school an ongoing learning institution. That doesn't mean just teaching. We have to be learners as well* (VIC1 Educator).

It has been argued that teachers are better positioned to support students' learning if they are open to value and learn from the knowledge that parents possess about their children (Jones 2020). Similarly, Kendall and Puttick (2020) assert that teachers need to be 'boundary spanners' (p. 44), so that they can tap into the knowledge and experience that parents from refugee backgrounds possess about their children. Despite the rhetoric of schools partnering with parents, it has been argued that the views of parents are rarely sought (Crozier & Davies 2007), and that teachers tend to have more difficulties relating to 'parents who have a different cultural frame of reference' (Berthelsen & Walker 2008, p.36). In response to a participating EAL teacher's comment that many subject teachers in her school have a '*disconnected feeling that they can't approach parents [from refugee backgrounds]*' (TAS4 Educator), it is argued that the responsibility for refugee background students [and their parents] should be 'shared across the whole staff' (Baak & Miller 2019, p.42). Likewise, in line with Schleicher (2016), it is asserted that educators who come from different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds than parents in their school communities need to be 'ably trained to know how and when to communicate with parents' (p.30).

5 Conclusion

By exploring the perceptions held by refugee background parents and educators from Australian public secondary schools who participated in two qualitative studies, this chapter focuses on transition from a parental engagement perspective. Drawing on the concept of 'trans-locational spaces' (Anthias 2008), it is highlighted that resettlement sets in motion a process of transition, impacting not only refugee background families who move to Australia, but also the educators and others within the Australian school community.

Although refugee background parents may experience a range of challenges linked, for instance, to their English proficiency or familiarity with Australian school norms; this chapter argues that there needs to be a shift away from viewing refugee background parents from a deficit perspective, so that there is a recognition of the strengths they bring to the school communi-

ty. Valuing parents from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds requires looking beyond narrow assumptions that parents need to be 'like us' (Crozier & Davies 2007, p.300), that is English-speaking and familiar with Australian educational and cultural norms. Rather than building relationships based on preconceived ideas, educators need to listen to and learn from the refugee background parents in their school communities, so that they can better understand what parents are already doing, what their needs are, and how they can work together to support the child.

However, an understanding of the differential positioning of individuals within the school domain also demands a focus beyond the agentic actions of individuals to wider structures of power operating within the school community as well as in the broader society. At the school level, ongoing evaluation is imperative to ensure that parental engagement strategies and practices reflect the needs of the school community (Kendall & Puttick 2020). Likewise, policy decisions need to ensure that all refugee background parents (regardless of where they are resettled) have equitable access to services so that they can participate in their Australian school community. This pertains, for instance, to funding arrangements to ensure parents have access to support from interpreters or bicultural workers (Azerdogan 2019). In addition, educators need to be adequately prepared in their initial teacher training and through professional development so that they can communicate in culturally appropriate ways with parents from refugee backgrounds (Jones 2020). To develop effective relationships based on mutual understanding, it is therefore argued that educators and refugee background parents need to value and learn from each other's knowledge and experience.

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Refugee student education in Greece: Approaches and views of their parents

Dimitris Zachos and Aikaterina Pavlidou

1 Introduction

The wars in Syria, Somalia and Sudan, the political conditions and insurrections in Iraq, Afghanistan and Eritrea, as well as the recent Russian invasion in Ukraine have led to millions of people being forcibly displaced. These people leave their homes and possessions and suffer long-term hardships with unpredictable and in many cases fatal consequences. Although most displaced people find refuge and stay in countries neighboring their own, not a few are looking for a way to reach the economically developed countries of the West. In 2015 more than one million people entered the Greek state national borders, as a path to their transition to one of the richest countries of the European Union (Sekeris & Vasilakis, 2016). Most of them achieved their goal and reached countries such as Denmark, Germany, and France.

In 2016, however, the policy of the European Union changed, and its member states closed their borders to refugees. In addition, a part of the Balkan Peninsula and Central and Eastern Europe states began to place deadly barbed wire along their borders and to build walls. The way the European Union reacted to one of the biggest humanitarian crises that the continent has faced since the Second World War (Georgakopoulos, 2016) is typical of the shift of its policies to the right. Despite the rhetoric of defending human rights, the European Union has restricted the routes and ways through which displaced people can enter its territory and apply for asylum. “Rather than creating a bold, orderly system providing safe avenues for people to seek protection in Europe, European leaders have increasingly focused on blocking borders and negotiating with human rights violating governments to stop them coming” (Amnesty International, 2017). Furthermore, the use of militaristic terminology, such as “hybrid threats” “hybrid attack” “undermine our Union” (European Commission, 2021) by European Union officials weakens interdependence and humanism and reinforces xenophobia, intolerance, and racism.

2 Refugees and migrants in Greece

On March 8, 2016, when North Macedonia closed its borders, a number of refugees and migrants were forced to remain in Greece (Amnesty International, 2016). This was not the first time Greece has received refugees and migrants in the last hundred years. In fact, on two previous occasions, the number of refugees and migrants was much higher. More specifically, in 1922, when Greece lost the war with Turkey, about two million people found refuge on its territory (Zachos, 2009). The second case concerns the 1990s, when about two million refugees, mostly from neighboring countries, migrated to Greece to find a better fate (Antonopoulos & Winterdyk, 2006).

In the recent period the number of refugees and migrants remaining in Greece is small: 166.144 people, 67% of whom are registered as refugees, 30% migrants and 3% stateless (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d. 1). In terms of origin, most of them come from Syria. More detailed data can be found in the table below:

Table 1. Refugees and migrants' origin

Country/territory of origin	Population
Afghanistan	39.870
Greece	4.705
Iraq	15.635
Syrian Arab Republic	42.793
Various	63.141
Total	166.144

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d. 1)

However the change in the way the European Union treats refugees, as well as the policy choices of the Greek governments (Moskovou, 2020) have made life even more difficult for refugees and migrants in Greece. The asylum process has been lengthened in terms of time, and living conditions remain -if not worsened- miserable (Smith, 2021). This policy is probably intended to force refugees to send the following message to their own people:

> "Do not come here, you will suffer, there is no respect for our legislated rights, stay where you are or save money and leave with smugglers!" (Tsiakalos, 2017).

2.1 Refugee and migrant children education in Greece

Among refugees and migrants there are about forty-five thousand children. More specifically, according to UNICEF (n.d.), in September 2020 there were 44.500 refugee and migrant children in Greece, of whom over 4.000 were unaccompanied.

Children are physically and emotionally highly vulnerable (Hieronymi, 2008). Refugee children may have had traumatic experiences not only during the journey, but also in the country of their origin, as well as in the country of their arrival (Hart, 2009). Refugee children may have lost one or both of their parents (Williams, 2006), suffered intimidation, deprivation of water and food, persecutions, physical and emotional violence. Furthermore, refugee children carry traumas, while the disruption of their social life may cause psychiatric disorders like anxiety and depression (Hart, 2009). Regarding their experiences in the "host" country, in many cases refugee children spend long time in camps (Ajduković & Ajduković, 1993), a fact that increases the uncertainty about their future, which in turn causes stress and mental difficulties (Van de Wiel, Castillo-Laborde Urzúa, Fish & Scholte, 2021).

Refugee children are expected to adapt to a different cultural environment and learn a new language (Rutter, 2003). Schools can help their social integration, as well as their wellbeing (Christie & Sidhu, 2002) and provide them with the best setting for their socialization, while help them to cope with the adverse effects of war and displacement. Particularly during the early years of the presence of refugees and immigrants in a new country, the school can provide an environment that is characterized by security, so that they heal their wounds and return to a regularity that will empower them and make them optimistic for the future (Matthews, 2008). However, and although education is one of the fundamental children's rights, globally only half of the refugee children attend school normally (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d. 2).

In Greece, the educational system remained completely monocultural until the mid -1990s. Since that time, foreign children's participation in schools and European Union's policies that favored social variation and human rights led to changes in the way Greek state and civic society manage issues of student differentiation (Zachos, 2009). So, issues of "otherness" were highlighted in public debate, in governmental policies, in academic theoretical and research production and in school practices. University faculties of social sciences and especially schools of education started to offer courses related to multiculturalism, racism, discrimination, as well as different religions, identities, and language (of origin). They also conducted scientific research on the different social groups of the Greek territory and were organized intervention programs to improve their living and especially schooling conditions. This

shift in the educational policy of the Greek state is manifested: First, by the measures of positive discrimination that were taken in favour of the only recognized minority group, the Muslims of Thrace (and indirectly in favour of the Roma). Second, by the attempts to reform school curriculum towards the recognition of multiculturalism (Faas, 2011) and introduce an intercultural approach in schools. These changes, however, were not enough to improve the educational performance of many refugee and migrant students, who continue to underachieve (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). Let alone that they were timid and incomplete.

We underline here that apart from systemic factors such as poverty and social exclusion, other causes of refugee and migrant students' underachievement include:

First, the complete lack or underfunctioning of support structures such as Reception Classes, Tutoring departments and Support Classes (Zachos, 2009). Second, school curriculum, which still serves the national myth that the Greek nation has existed for three centuries within the framework of 'Hellenic-Christian civilisation' (Zambeta, 2005). Third, in complete antithesis to the relevant legislation (Law 2413, 1996), which provided for teaching lessons in the native language of non-Greek speaking pupils, these lessons have never been in effect (Gkaintartzi, Kiliari & Tsokalidou, 2016). Fourth, public schools were trying to adapt to the new reality with few educational resources and state aid. The same factors apply to teachers, whose basic studies did not include courses in intercultural education and the state did not take care to fill these gaps through training programs. Fifth, due to a lack or minimal knowledge of the Greek language, many refugees and migrant parents abstain from school activities, seldom participate in Parent Association Bodies, and hardly ever do they claim their own and their children's rights within the education system (Spinthourakis & Karakatsanis, 2011: 50).

2.2 Refugee – migrant parents and their children's schooling

Family is an important factor in childrens' education, since its environment is their first informal school, shaping values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and contributing to their emotional, social, and cognitive development (Mylonakou-Keke, 2006).

Parental involvement is related to parent's socio-economic and educational level, expectations of their children, parental self-esteem, and the gender of the parent (Lee & Bowen, 2006). It appears that parental involvement in school activities has a positive impact on student achievement (Epstein, 2001). But the actual context of positive parental contribution is an issue that

causes tensions in their relationship with schools (Smith & Wohlstetter, 2009). Parents can help with their children's homework, develop their internal motivation for learning and improve their behaviour at school (Fan & Williams, 2010). But parents can cause problems when they do not trust school and undermine teachers' work (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Parents' active involvement in issues related to their children's education is also -and probably more- important for students from culturally different backgrounds, especially in primary education (Tsokalidou, 2012). Students feel culturally valued when they see their parents cooperating with the school (Govaris, 2011).

However, there are several inhibiting factors, namely socio-economic problems, such as low income and racism experienced by families from different cultural backgrounds (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2015). Furthermore, parents' non (or limited) language knowledge (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010), limited educational opportunities in their country and in refugee camps, social integration, ignorance of aspects of the host country's education system (Antony-Newman, 2019: 369; Hatzidaki, 2006), deferential attitudes towards school authority (Nicholau, 2000), and bad experiences at school distract them from engaging in their children's education.

At this point, it is worth underlining that a part of the research and theoretical work on parental involvement seems to adopt the deficit theory. More specifically, refugee and migrant parents are presented as a homogenous group that all its members do not know how to help their children (Kroeger, 2014) and do not want to participate in the issues that affect them (Doucet, 2011). This -like any other unfair and undocumented generalization- creates problems for refugees and migrants, as it makes it easier for the preachers of hate to target them and make them scapegoats. After all, there are many refugees who believe that education is essential to their children (Dryden-Peterson, 2011), and many parents from different ethnic origins that are very positively disposed towards their involvement in schools (Peters, Seeds, Goldstein & Coleman, 2007).

As it concerns the case of Greece, Hatzidaki (2006) found that parents had a positive view of the Greek educational system, as well as of the attitude of teachers towards them and their children. Hatzidaki (2006), Polyzos (2012) and Antony-Newman (2019) indicated that parents from different cultural backgrounds take an active interest in their children's education, help them as much as possible with their homework, visit the school frequently and wish to have more regular contact with teachers, as they believe that this communication helps to improve their children's academic performance. Sarikoudi & Apostolidou (2020) found that many refugee parents value education, demand active engagement in their children's education, and complaints regarding the poor quality of their children's learning. Barboudaki, Vitsou, and Gaidartzi (2019), have observed that teachers' interest in reach-

ing out to refugee parents, getting to know and communicate with them, recognizing and valuing their language and culture, as well as encouraging diversity through daily teaching practice are factors that contribute to a better relationship between parents and the school. At this point we should emphasize the role that teachers can play in strengthening parental involvement of refugees and migrants. Teachers can gather the specific information that will help them to understand the living conditions of refugee students and thus adjust their actions to bring their parents to school. A simple note or even a phone call may not be enough and teachers may need to call interpreters and go with them to meet refugee and migrant parents themselves. Teachers can also be learners of their students' cultural and cognitive elements, which they can introduce into the classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

3 The method

3.1 The aim and research questions

The aim of our research was to explore how refugee parents perceive education of their children in Greece.

Our research questions were:

- How do refugee parents experience the transition from their country to Greece and how it affects their children's education?
- How do refugee parents perceive their role in their children's education?
- How do refugee parents perceive and evaluate the facilities and measures concerning their children's education in Greece?
- What are their suggestions to improve their children's education?

3.2 Research strategy and technique

The aim of our research is served by qualitative research, as it enables us to study our issues in depth, i.e. to explore participants' experience, values, beliefs and intentions and to produce such an amount of information that gives them richer understanding of the social phenomena (Merriam, 1998).

Our research strategy was Case Study, one of the five traditions of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). Case Study is an exploration of a "bounded system" over time through details (Creswell, 1998). Our case is refugees' education in Greece.

We chose Case Study because it is carried out in natural settings and exploring phenomena in a real-life context (Yin, 2018). Case study is appropriate when the researchers' aim is to provide a detailed picture for a social group and is better suited to the study of experiences, behaviors and emotions.

Our main research technique was semi-structured open-ended interview, which allows participants to share with the researchers their experiences and views in a comfortable and flexible way. Furthermore, it enables researchers to pose similar questions to all participants while they can also make follow-up questions to allow better exploration of the topic.

Due to the circumstances during the period in which our research took place (March to June 2021), it was conducted face-to-face in real time remotely via the zoom and whatsapp platforms. Online face-to-face interviews with eye contact create to some extent a relationship of mutual understanding between the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2017).

3.3 Participants

The individuals who took part in our research were selected using the snowballing technique, in which the first/previous members who meet certain characteristics (refugee parents with children attending primary school in Greece) recommend the next.

Fifteen people took part in our research, eleven women and four men. Five of the women were staying in shelters in the area of Thessaloniki (Diavata), while the others resided in houses in Thessaloniki. As for the men, they all lived in houses, two in Chios, one in Tripoli and one in Thessaloniki (see Table 2).

Participants were informed about the aims of the study and their right to withdraw without prior notification. They were also given an electronic ethics statement and a consent form for the processing of their personal data. Acronyms were used to conceal the identities of refugee parents, and thus confidentiality.

Of the fifteen interviews: ten were conducted with the help of translators; three of them with an Arabic-speaking interpreter and seven with a Farsi (a language spoken in Persia, Afghanistan, etc.) interpreter. The remaining five interviews were conducted in English.

Table 2. Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Education	Country of Origin	Employment Status
MK	F	47	Secondary	Iraq	Seamstress
SM	F	35	Primary	Afghanistan	Unemployed
FN	F	38	Higher	Afghanistan	Unemployed
MS	F	29	Secondary	Afghanistan	Unemployed
ES	F	39	Primary	Iraq	Unemployed
NA	F	38	Primary	Kurd from Syria	Unemployed
AI	F	29	Higher	Cameroon	Retail sales worker
AD	F	38	Primary	Nigeria	Furlough
SH	F	42	Secondary	Syria	Cook
ZP	F	41	Higher	Iran – Kurdistan	Unemployed
SA	F	27	Secondary	Kurd from Iran	Unemployed
HR	M	33	Higher	Afghanistan (Hazaras)	Interpreter (NGO)
AH	M	37	Secondary	Afghanistan	Gas station employee
DR	M	42	Secondary	Afghanistan (Hazaras)	Interpreter (NGO)
BA	M	40	Primary	Iraq	Handyman

3.4 Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed and recorded on a computer. Data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, as this technique allows us to discover the themes and concepts and answer the questions posed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). More specifically, after we carefully studied data, we recorded keywords or key phrases, organized categories and grouped them into themes, which are detailed below.

As it concerns our results' presentation, we integrated carefully selected direct quotes from participants' narratives, quotes that support our interpretation and provided "voice" to refugee parents (Morrow, 2005). Furthermore, we report themes and patterns without quantification (Dey, 1993), as qualitative research does not claim generalizations or laws.

4 Findings and discussion

4.1 Difficulties of transition

The refugee parents who participated in our research started their narrative by referring to the difficulties they encountered and continue to encounter during their transition to Greece:

> *ZP: We didn't leave our country by choice. We had no choice. And the situation there was so difficult… And here the situation is against us… we just left our country, and nobody can understand how we feel about it… We left our country because we saw children dying… and we tried to save our children… we came here after seeing war with bombs and guns… and here the war is psychological…*

Refugees face difficulties in different places (Hart, 2009; Smith, 2021) and this is one reason why they express their fatigue and frustration (Ajduković & Ajduković, 1993; Van de Wiel, Castillo-Laborde Urzúa, Fish & Scholte, 2021), just like the people who took part in our research:

> *HR: … Once we arrived in Greece the situation inside the camp was really awful … I couldn't continue living there…*

Even when refugee parents of our research were granted asylum and left the "refugee reception centers", they were still facing a problem of survival, since it is very difficult to find a job in Greece due to its economic crisis. Even the meagre allowance they receive lasts only one month after leaving the refugee camps:

> *DR: The government is no longer helping financially or with housing … I also had a very difficult period because they canceled my credit card and also, I was not allowed to stay in the shelter. So I had to find a house to rent, to find a job … on the island it is really very difficult to find a job …*

Even when our participants found jobs, the hours and energy they consumed left them no time to deal with their children's school responsibilities:

> *AH: … I'm always at work … and I don't have a lot of time to spend with my kids, to ask them about school, to help them with homework…*

Another difficulty of transition to a new place that refugee face is the lack of social contacts and living on the margins of society:

> *HR: …people see you as an alien… like you're from nowhere … it can make you feel very bad you know … and now you suddenly must deal with adults who don't want you to be here…*

Living on the margins of society is also linked to the absence of local language skills, which is also a barrier to finding a job:

BA: The main ... (issue is) ...that I can't find a proper job ...and during our stay here, now it's almost a year and a half ...no training has been provided to us ...no, no course to learn the language, or any seminar on how to find a job, How to succeed in a job interview…

AH: I work in a car wash…all my friends and colleagues are Greek. So, I try to learn, I try to get in touch with them, I try to communicate with them. But, Greek is a very difficult language. You know that.

The phenomenon of Xenophobia, that characterizes a part of people in Greece and leads to offensive and racist attitudes against refugees (Tsitselikis, 2018: 161), engages and the participants in our research:

SH: Some people insult me, some people hit me, some people try to take my hijab out on the street. So, it's all mixed up. ...they all offer to help me but only if I stop wearing the hijab…

ZP: ... in the apartment where I live, there are Greeks living there and when they heard that a refugee is coming to the apartment, they changed their front door and put iron bars on the windows.

4.2 Refugee children education in Greece

Our participants, the same as those who have taken part in other related researches (Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Peters, Seeds, Goldstein & Coleman, 2007), recognize education as a value, and acknowledge its importance for their own, as well as their children's social integration:

BA: ... School will help my children to achieve great things in the future or to study at university ...

Education as a value of refugee parents is reflected in the high expectations they set for their children's academic performance, which helps them improve themselves (Polyzos, 2012: 185), as ZP told us:

ZP: I have high expectations, I want them to reach the one hundred percent of their abilities. ...I want them to be like the Greek kids, in math and other subjects to be like them.

Refugee parents in our survey stressed that their children are the ones who help them learn Greek and play the role of translator when needed:

AH: ... children come home and have some tasks. So, they ask me "dad, can you help us to do our tasks?". So, the only opportunity to write, to read, to understand

Greek was to translate their tasks on my phone and I would translate them into English and from English I would try to manage it.

BA: ... For example, at home, most of the time they speak to each other in Greek and it was helpful for us to improve our Greek.

The same as in the papers of Mylonakou-Keke (2006: 22) and Hatzidaki (2006: 736), participants in our research appreciate the role that school plays in their lives, as an institution that respects them as personalities, respects their culture, cares about their children and themselves, gives them the opportunity to "make their voices heard" and evolve as individuals in Greek society.

MK: ... Our children's teachers really like our songs and dances. They like our country, Iraq... our language... Arabic. ... at school at Christmas ... they said this song that is ... all languages and ...our daughter sang this song that is in Arabic for Christmas.

4.3 Refugee parent involvement in their children's education

Hatzidaki (2006), Polyzos (2012) and Antony-Newman (2019) found that refugee parents want to be actively involved in their children's education, in various ways. Our participants seem to do the same, first because they want to be informed about their children's progress and to communicate with the school:

BA: ... Of course, communication with the school is necessary and will give parents an insight into their children's behavior and how they are doing at school. And I think that's necessary on both sides...

The second reason cited by the refugee parents who took part in our research for their active participation in the school's activities and events is the opportunity provided to them to integrate into the local community. This is due, as can be seen from similar research (Hatzidaki, 2006; Polyzos, 2012; Antony-Newman, 2019), to their desire to develop their relationships with teachers and the parents of the other children:

HR: We are very – very friendly with the other parents of the children now. Most of the parents are new, and they are very welcoming.

The third reason as to why our participants want to be involved in their children's education is because they believe that if they if they act in this way, it will help their offspring to progress academically:

> *HR: ... it is very important…to prepare your child to go to school, to encourage them, to help them with their homework and eventually succeed.*

Participants in our research highlighted the main problems that prevent them from participating in their children's education: The first and most frequent one, as shown by other research (Antony-Newman, 2019: 369; Hatzidaki, 2006: 773), is the language barrier:

> *BA: ... our language became their second language, so I don't think we can help them much in school.*

A second problem, concerns their living conditions, which distance parents from their children's education, especially for those who have a job:

> *AH: ... I'm always at work ... and I don't have much time to spend with my children, to ask them about school, to help them with tasks and things like that.*

A third problem, which has been identified in other research too (Jamal Al-deen & Windle, 2015; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010), concerns the obstacles refugee – parents face while they try to help their children with schoolwork due to the differences between Greek and their own country's educational structures. This highlights the different opportunities they had to help their children in their country and those they have in Greece, during their transition process:

> *BA: ... The only difference is that in Iraq I could help my son with his duties, but here I cannot help him with anything… Now he is the one who teaches me…*

Coronavirus increased the educational problems of refugee parents and in particular made it even more difficult for them to communicate with the school:

> *BA: No… I was hoping to be close to the [school] environment ... I feel close now, but I hope to be closer in the future. ... I don't have communication with the school now. I used to have with the principal and the other teachers ... now I don't.*

Finally, parents living in "refugee reception centers" also highlighted barriers regarding communication with the school, mainly due to administrative issues, along with the aforementioned problems.

> *FN: We can't get in touch with them. Because the authorities in the shelter are in contact with the school…And the authorities have to convey the problem and explain it…*

4.4 Suggestions for improvement

The majority of the refugee parents of our research showed a thorough view regarding their children's education in Greece. Some parents were satisfied with the initial education programme according to which, refugee children staying in the "refugee reception centers" were benefited by the afternoon classes in nearby schools:

> *DR: afternoon classes helped our children. Because they learned Greek there and had some maths… And also, they had experience with the other people, with the other children who came from different countries.*

Some other parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of the compensatory education facilities (tutoring and remedial classes) provided to their children. These facilities reveal that the refugee children education programme is underdeveloped, monocultural and not adequately funded. In this frame, as found by Sarikoudi & Apostolidou (2020), refugee parents stressed out their complaints regarding the education provided to their children:

> *ZP: … education is not ok, because they don't care they don't focus on my son's education, they just focus on language to help my son integrate into the Greek society.*
>
> *SH: … it would be good to have special classes just for refugees in which they can explain to them how* the school works … and make them understand more about the language…

Some refugee parents questioned the competence of their children's teachers and asked them to allocate more time for their children:

> *BA: … some teachers don't know to teach in a way that students will comprehend the lesson… but I think these classes are not very helpful here because they don't have professionals to teach refugees… Teachers don't have specific training for refugees… like the Nordic countries or Germany and more developed countries.*
>
> *AH: … My kids tell me we don't understand most of what is said in school. … I would like teachers to spend more time with my children…to be more active… to upgrade their lessons.*

This issue probably needs more attention, as recent research (Barboudaki, Vitsou & Gkaintartzi, 2019) also stresses the need for better training for teachers in order to achieve better results. The differences in the participants' views are connected with the lack of a unified, organized education policy towards refugees, emerging by the social instability regarding refugees in Greek society.

Noting that our participants consider as a positive step the presence of an interpreter at various stages of school life. This is because, at least at the beginning of their presence in the school, educational activities in an unfamil-

iar institution can be hard for both children and parents (Gkaintartzi, Kiliari & Tsokalidou, 2016):

DR: Of course, I would ask them to have an interpreter for my children. Because it was so helpful for them when they had it in [NGO NAME] for a very short time… But, in the public school, if my children had an interpreter, I think it would be very helpful for them. ...

AH: ... Schools should invite parents to meetings, which would be attended by translators, so that if parents had a suggestion or a complaint or a concern about the educational programme, they could communicate with the teachers and help them solve the problems.

Finally, another interesting proposal put forward by refugee parents that participated in our research, was that the Greek state should organize Greek language courses in schools for adults, i.e. for themselves:

BA: I just came here, I was really interested to start studying the language, but I don't have the opportunity.

SM: It would be very helpful for us to learn (Greek), because when you go to a new country you have to learn the language to communicate. But they (the Greek education system and NGOs) haven't helped us with anything.

These courses can help refugees and migrants overcome marginalisation and integrate into local and national societies (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010).

5 Conclusion

The findings of our research showed that refugee parents face major problems in their transition from their country to Greece due to xenophobia, racism and the lack of job opportunities. These problems add to the difficulties refugees face because of their lack of competence in Greek language and their long-term stay in refugee accommodation centers. Our data show that refugee parents who participated in our research value education, pursue school involvement, try to help their children in any way they can and positively appreciate any effort aimed at assisting the educational integration and progress of their children. Participants' narratives revealed that the Greek educational system adopts a mechanistic integration approach, as the teaching process focuses on the Greek language and culture and any form of engagement with the refugees as individuals, their problems and their distinctive characteristics, seems to be absent. Parents' views and the issues they emphasized reveal the need for the Greek state to implement such an educational policy, which will respond to human rights and the rights of refugees, by

changing the curriculum, educational resources and provide teachers with the assistance they need to fulfil their role.

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Syrian refugee families in Iceland: Aspects of transitions in education and society

Hanna Ragnarsdóttir and Susan Rafik Hama

1 Introduction

Around 800 refugees have resettled in Iceland in the past decades, from 1956 to 2021 (Government of Iceland, n.d.). So-called quota refugees are invited to Iceland by the government and settle in various municipalities in the country. Before the refugees arrive, decisions regarding from which countries refugees arrive are made in cooperation with the UN Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR).

In 2016 a group of fifty-six Syrian quota refugees arrived in Iceland from Lebanon and settled in three municipalities, altogether ten families, comprising twenty adults and thirty-six children (Icelandic Red Cross, 2016). A study (Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018) was conducted in 2016-2017 which aimed to understand the first experiences of these adults and their children in their school settings, and opportunities and challenges which they faced in the schools and society.

In this paper we revisit four of the ten families in the study to explore various aspects of transitions, such as role transitions, educational transitions and sociopolitical transitions and the intersections of these during the five years since their arrival in Iceland. Our research questions include:

- What transitions have the refugee families experienced in Iceland during the first five years?
- What are the parents' educational expectations for their children?
- How do the families maintain their religion, culture and heritage language?
- What opportunities and challenges have the parents and children experienced in their educational process?

2 Background and context

The guidelines for the reception of quota refugees, i.e. refugees invited to resettle in Iceland (Stjórnarráð Íslands, 2013) stipulate that services are pro-

vided for one year after the arrival of the refugees. The role of the refugee committee of the Icelandic government is to decide in cooperation with the UNHCR from which country or countries refugees should be invited to resettle in Iceland each year. The committee then proposes to the government of Iceland a general policy and organization of the reception of refugee groups from a certain country or countries each year. Based on the government's decision, the Icelandic Red Cross cooperates with the government in finding three to five support families for each refugee family. A contract is made with certain municipalities for receiving and providing services for the refugees. Certain criteria are considered and have to be fulfilled by the municipalities that are chosen, including the possibilities for education, the availability of social services, health services, jobs, housing and other matters considered to be of importance in each case. When the refugees arrive, they are granted health services, courses in Icelandic, courses on Icelandic society, first (L1) language teaching where possible, leisure activities, services of interpreters, assistance in finding jobs and other necessary services. Generally, the aim of the reception and support is to enable as well as possible the integration of the refugees into Icelandic society.

3 Theoretical framework: Aspects of transitions and integration of refugees

Various approaches to education and integration to a new society highlight the position of minority groups in schools and societies from a critical perspective and analyze what factors in educational and societal structures cause and maintain unequal status (May & Sleeter, 2010). These approaches are applied in this study to critically address the societal and educational experiences of the parents and their children and suggest improvements. Nieto (2010) claims that educational systems need to critically address inequalities and ensure equality, social justice, empowerment, voice, and dialogue for their individual students and teachers.

Writings on the wellbeing of refugees are also consulted in this study (Rousseau, Measham, & Nadeau, 2012). Findings of research with families with refugee background have indicated that many of these families have experienced difficult situations that can affect their daily life and education. These include challenges in resettling in a new country such as differences in values, norms, and languages (Jensdóttir, 2016) and health issues.

Emphasizing the strengths and resilience of children and youth with refugee background is also important. Alsayed & Wildes (2018), reporting on their study of difficulties and strengths of Syrian children with refugee back-

ground in Turkey, emphasize that schools should address both the difficulties and the strengths of refugee children. They note that large numbers of refugee and war-affected children, exhibit remarkable resilience and actively adapt to, cope with, and navigate complex situations of adversity. In their research, the children enjoy play, want to discuss their situation and hold opinions about their needs.

Refugee families face many challenges when resettling in a new country, including adjusting to new social and geographical conditions and new roles. According to Richman (1998), this can lead to a loss of status, role, and respect, and may result in various ailments. While many refugees are well educated and have skills and professions that could contribute to their community and society, research in Iceland has indicated that their qualifications are rarely recognized (Alþjóðamálastofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2017). This can cause difficulties and depression for many refugees. Additionally, according to Richman (1998), refugees often lack social networks and therefore, many women and mothers of young children may experience isolation when they resettle in a new country.

Lloyd, Pilerot and Hultgren's study (2017) focused on the information experiences and practices of transition and marginality in the context of resettlement and integration of refugees. The authors analysed Syrian refugees' experiences of re-establishment in Sweden and focus on their challenges as they deal with the disruption of knowledge and consequent changes in their previous routine information and media practices. They maintain that transition is a disruptive process which can result in the loss of various competences related to information that connect people to their social, economic and everyday environments. The authors report on the main themes of place (loss and reconnection), being safe, gaining entry, and reassembling fractured landscapes.

Strang, Baillot and Mignard's (2018) research on transition examined the particular case of transition from the uncertain position of an asylum seeker to a refugee with statutory rights. They explored the interaction of structure and agency in refugees' lived experience of integration in super-diversity. The findings indicated that refugees' desire to be independent was thwarted by inaccessible systems that were insensitive to language and cultural barriers. Furthermore, poverty and disruption of social networks undermined effective integration.

Findings of a study by McCarthy et al (2020) on the experiences of two refugees from Iran and Afghanistan who resettled in the U.S.A. indicated that there were contextual barriers to occupation, both systemic and socio-cultural that impacted their ability to engage in meaningful occupation leading to a lack of belonging. The findings reveal that the refugees adapted to these barriers by adapting their occupations.

Research studies on transitions in education have revealed a number of challenges. The findings of Baker and Irwin's (2019) longitudinal, ethnographic study on the educational trajectories of adult refugees in Australia indicated that although journeys into and through higher education can be challenging for all learners, students from refugee backgrounds face particular difficulties due to their culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and pre-settlement experiences of instability, insecurity, likely trauma and interrupted education.

McWilliams and Bonet's (2016) research study focused on how the premigratory experiences of 90 Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi refugee youth shape their aspirations, needs and capabilities as they transition to postsecondary education and work in the American urban context. The findings indicate that while coping with interrupted schooling, residual trauma, and the pressures of poverty, the youth continue to experience precarity in their lives which began in their flight contexts and extending into their post-resettlement social worlds.

4 Method

A qualitative, in-depth approach was chosen to conduct the research and to understand the experiences and views of the participants (Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Flick, 2006).

Methods of data collection included four in-depth semi-structured interviews with the refugee parents in four families, altogether six participants. The pseudonyms of the six parents are: Sahar, Nahla, Waleed and Layla (couple), and Hassan and Zahra (couple). We applied a narrative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the parents' experiences. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to collect data as they are considered one way of establishing respectful relationships with participants and obtaining in-depth data (Kvale, 2007).

In this research, establishing respectful relationships according to culturally responsive methodologies (Berryman, SooHoo & Nevin, 2013) with participants from the beginning was prioritized. One of the authors, an Arabic speaking researcher, conducted two interviews in Arabic. Both authors together conducted one interview in English and one interview in English and Arabic. The parents chose the language of the interviews. The emphasis in all interviews was on creating an environment of trust and gaining in-depth data. All interviews were conducted online because of the pandemic situation in January and February 2022. An interview guide was prepared before the interviews. However, during the interviews, the researchers carefully provided both time and flexibility to allow the participants to talk freely about is-

sues of their choice that were not covered in the interview guides. The interviews lasted on average one hour.

The participants were six quota refugee parents in four families. At the time of the previous research in 2016-2017, most of their children attended preschools and compulsory schools. At the time of this research some of the children had started upper secondary schools and universities. All the participating parents in the study are of Syrian nationality and stated Arabic as their first language. The education of the participants differed.

The project followed the general ethical practices for research involving humans: respect of the rights, interests and dignity of the participants and related persons (Kvale, 2007). The Icelandic Data Protection Authority was informed of the original research, and it was carried out in accordance with the University of Iceland Scientific Ethical Guidelines. An informed consent form was developed in Arabic and presented to the parents. Their anonymity was ensured, and their decisions on the language of the interviews were respected.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The qualitative procedures of content analysis were applied for analysing the interviews, including coding and constant comparison of data (Flick, 2006). The researchers read and re-read the transcripts. First, codes were developed and then the researchers discussed the codes and developed main themes based on these codes.

5 Findings

This section presents findings from the interviews with the participating parents. Themes drawn from the data and presented below are as follows: Transitions, maintaining religion, culture and heritage language, and opportunities and challenges experienced during the five years since their arrival in Iceland.

While the findings in the study from 2016-2017 (Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018) indicated that most of the children were doing well both academically and socially in their first months in the schools, the children and families also experienced several challenges. These included the illiteracy of some of the children and families and interrupted schooling of the children before arriving in Iceland, hidden traumas among the children, lack of information flow and differences in norms, values, languages, and expectations between the schools and homes. The parents expressed their loss of social networks and family, structural discrimination and loss of role and status. Many of the women in the group faced new situations, responsibilities, and experienced

isolation in Iceland. Some of them lost their roles as independent working women while others were not used to going out alone or amongst strangers.

The findings from the interviews in 2022 indicate that the four families have overcome the initial obstacles and are generally happy with their current lives. The parents place a focus on the education of their children but have also managed to further their own education. It also indicates that schools are an important source of support for these children and their families. The participating parents were either employed or studying and some of them doing both. Both children and families' connection to teachers, schools, community, and the society in general increase their wellbeing and active participation in the society. However, the parents describe various obstacles and challenges that they have faced in their role, educational and sociopolitical transitions during the last five years.

5.1 Transitions

Some of the participants talked about their role transitions during their five years in Iceland. While some had got permanent jobs shortly after they arrived, others described challenges in getting permanent jobs, and how their previous education and work experiences were not accepted in Iceland.

Sahar noted that she had not had a permanent job since she arrived in Iceland, but had been working as a translator and enjoying this:

> Not a permanent job. Since I came to Iceland, as I told last time, I think, no when we did the interview I hadn't but I'm just working as translator since that. It's not permanent work but it's really good work and I really enjoy it because it's just like feeling of helping, especially like I'm the only woman here who just speaks English at that time when I started … But now, around two months ago, three months ago I started to work at school, it's a temporary contract for seven months. I'm just doing some social support for the new refugee children at the school.

Although she did not have a permanent job, Sahar was happy being able to support the new refugee children and translate. She had also had the opportunity to further her education in Iceland. She had a Bachelor degree from her country of origin when she arrived in Iceland, had completed a masters' degree in Iceland and begun her doctoral studies in a university in Iceland during her five years in the country. She described how proud she was of her personal and educational success as well as her children's progress:

> My education is one of my achievements. My children's education is also like, they are doing very very well so I feel this is a success so I made the right decision when I decided to move because I know that I see how they are doing well at

> the school, how they are feeling well also, which makes me very very happy. Having my little boy I feel like that's one of the achievements here because it was really hard for me to have a baby in Syria or in Lebanon with all this difficulty and the situations there so I feel this is also one of the positive. I always, when I look at him I just feel like, okay this is one of my achievements here in Iceland that it would never have happened maybe if I'm in Syria or in Lebanon. Learning the language also, like the Icelandic because it's really hard language.

However, Sahar noted that her husband had experienced not getting jobs in accordance to his education which he was not entirely pleased with:

> Now he's working, it's not a work that he wanted to do but it's a work. My husband is an engineer but he's working as an electrician. Which is not a thing that he is used to do, he is not very very happy but not, also not happy. It's just okay, he's not only home doing nothing so he's working at least.

The reason was that the evaluation of his degree from Syria was not as he expected and he was required to do a lot of courses to be evaluated as an engineer from Iceland. Sahar criticized the unclear answers that he had received. She explained:

> … and when he tried to ask what kind of courses or what courses he has to do, he got lost. I don't know, maybe no one knows or everyone just "okay you can ask here" no "you can ask here". It was kind of like, I don't know he just got lost so he couldn't get a clear answer what he has to do to get his …

The different educational system in conjunction with other cultural, societal and personal factors often work as a barrier for refugees to further their education. This was the case with Sahar's husband that he requiered to take different courses.

Participants interpreted their successful transition in different ways. They all agreed that learning the Icelandic language is important and they managed quite well to learn and use the language. For some of them, like Nahla, learning the Icelandic language, working and studying is considered successful educational transition:

> I use Icelandic at school and I work 100 per cent. I learned the language and use the language. I'm also learning at the university, I take few courses. I was a teacher in Syria.

Zahra holds a university degree but she prefers to stay at home with the children now. She took many Icelandic courses and uses the language. Her husband Hassan added:

> My wife is more clever than I. She took more courses and uses the language. I'm working but I use mainly English except for few things, words or terms that I use at work or with the teachers of my children.

Education is highly valued among the refugee families. The parents are eager for their children to continue and succeed in their education. The parents were satisfied with their children's progress in education and generally happy with the schools and teachers. Two parents talked proudly of how their children had managed to finish compulsory school and move on to upper secondary school and universities.

Waleed and Layla are very happy about the educational levels of their children today and about their life and work in Iceland. Layla said that they are not planning to move at all, they want their children to finish their studies and she added:

> I'm happy, you know my children are studying at the university, my youngest are in schools, I have a work and my husband is looking for a work, God willing.

Nahla said:

> I'm working as a teacher now and use the language daily, they understand me and I understand them. Before they gave me part time job in the kitchen but now I work with the children.

Zahra talked about their past experiences with the teachers and compared it to the situation at present. She said:

> When we came we didn't know how to contact the teachers, what way or how to talk to the teachers and how to behave with them, everything was somehow unclear, especially the first two years we were somehow like illiterate to their ways of teaching, learning and the subjects and the books. You know, we are still learning new things, year after year we learn more and more.

Sahar described a similar experience, that it was challenging in the beginning, but no longer as now they know whom to contact and where to go for further information and support regarding their children's education.

She noted that her children were doing very well in compulsory school. Their Icelandic was already very good and they did not need special support in Icelandic anymore. However, she noted that the schools were easy-going compared to the strict rules in her country of origin. Regarding her communication with the school, she noted that she had learned to ask when she wanted information, instead of waiting.

Waleed similary described a good relationship with the schools:

> It is an excellent relationship and also with the parents of the children. I think the kids are learning a lot from the school. Sometimes I think that they learn more if they get more care, they can do much better.

Zahra referred to their relation with the teachers:

> We have very good relations with the teachers, we understand each other. There are contacts, emails and cooperations. We are very happy with this school, the previous school was fine but there were very few immigrant or refugee children.

> Our child hasn't received so much care and support but in this school everything goes very well. There are many immigrant and refugee children, children who speak the same language and from the same culture. The teachers have special style and way of supporting and teaching these children. Our child's Icelandic is better now and his learning is better and developed now.

All the parents mentioned that their children have both Arab and Icelandic friends. Some of the children have friends from the same language and culture, so they have the chances to use their heritage language and Icelandic, both inside and outside their school.

The parents felt that they had settled well in Iceland. While most had lived in the same area for five years, Hassan and Zahra had moved three times within Iceland. They were happy with the area, and the school that their son now attended and said:

> Now our neighbour is from Syria and we have good relations, we have continued to meet the support families but because of Corona we can not meet as often as before.

Some of the parents said that they had learned Icelandic quite well and had developed social networks in Iceland. Sahar said about her Icelandic that she had taken five courses and also practiced the language in her social life, and with her friends:

> I can read it and I understand like almost everything, not to word, I cannot say I understand word by word. It would be hard to understand the language word by word but in general I understand it very very well and I use like in my work in the school, I don't use any English, I just use Icelandic.

Sahar was very happy with her social network and explained that her friends were mostly Icelandic:

> I have, like my social life is just really good, thats why I'm not thinking of moving from this city because I really have a good social life here, and people you can consider as a family.

However, Sahar noted that because of the small size of the city, activities were rather limited:

> You know … because of the smallness of the city sometimes the activities are a little bit limited but for my friends we go eat together sometimes, we just go visit places … Yeah we go to the museum together. Sometimes we just talk, they come to my house, I go to their house. We eat together. I have a friend who always finds it nice to invite my children to her parents' house as afi og amma (translated from Icelandic: grandfather and grandmother) so they just go and they also spend time there.

Involvement and participation in various activities that impact these refugee families' own future and the future of their children made them feel that they were making positive contribution to their environment.

5.2 Maintaining religion, culture and heritage language

The parents emphasized the importance of maintaining their religion, culture and heritage language and also agreed that maintaining the Arabic language would strengthen the opportunities of their children. Waleed noted:

> I think in the future they will be a better contribution to the society. They know Icelandic and they know Arabic. They will be Icelandic speaking … and they know another language. It will be a good contribution for the society in Iceland. I think so.

Maintaining their heritage language is not only important for their future participation in the society, it also strengthens the bonding relations with family members and relatives abroad as Layla noted:

> I always try to remind them, they need to learn to keep their contact with our family, and of course this happens now our daughter is writing in Arabic to her uncle's or aunt's daughters.

Among the various challenges that refugee families face in addition to adapting to their new spaces is the maintainance of their religion, culture and heritage language. In some cases, parents take active role in teaching their children at home as Sahar noted:

> I always, I pray, read Quran, my children also just started an online school. They learn about religion, they learn Arabic, so yes. I try always to keep it at home like always, insisting on our culture, just trying to, I just don't want my children to be melted in this society.

Sahar talked about the importance of maintaining the heritage language of the family. She said that she found it important for her children to learn Arabic, to communicate with her parents, sisters, and brothers in Syria. She noted:

> You know it's, Arabic is our language, it's kind of our identity so I feel like it is important for them to have an identity. They live in Iceland but they are not Icelanders even though they speak the language, they are not. They will be always different.

Zahra and Hassan referred to the role of the school and teachers in reminding them of the importance of the mother tongue:

> Whenever we have a meeting with the teahers they remind us of the importance of our language. That it is very necessary to for us to use Arabic with our children at home. If our children do not learn our language, they won't be able to learn the second language or Icelandic well.

The role of the school and the teachers is not only restricted to reminding the refugee children of the importance of their language but also their religion as Zahra noted:

> In this new school our child was very happy and proud when the teacher gave him the role of explaining his faith and religion to his classmates. You know they are learning about different religion and because he is a Muslim. The teacher gave him this role.

Refugee families are often faced with multiple challenges when they arrive in their new environments. Despite the fact that they have to get used to their completely different spaces with different values and norms, they try to find their way and make their children feel at home. They teach their children their heritage language, values and norms of their culture and religion. Parents are often key persons in supporting their children in their new environment.

5.3 Opportunities and challenges

Being relocated as a family is very stressful, yet the participants talked about many opportunities that they had in Iceland, but also a number of challenges during the last five years. Layla noted:

> The biggest success was getting Icelandic citizenship in one year and eight months, nearly two years. We have been able since then to move and travel freely. No countries let us enter with a Syrian passport. When we got ours, I was able to travel and see my mom and sisters whom I haven't seen for six years. They were in Amman, Jordan. This has been the nicest thing until now and thank Allah, our children entered university, it is also a success.

For some of the participants, such as Waleed, getting a job, mixing with Icelandic people and the educational levels that their two older children reached, is a big success and an opportunity they got.

> And also we got jobs here in Iceland and we mix with people and got to know them more at work, and also our two oldest kids entered university and the youngest kids are doing well at school.

Zahra referred to another sort of success:

> We got introduced to the Icelandic society and we learned a lot about their culture, tradition and their ways of living, these important things made us more open toward Icelanders. We also learned about the school system here and teaching theories. All these were new for us.

The challenges described by the parents were related to the new language and culture which was unfamiliar to them at first. Waleed said:

> As for me, although I finished Icelandic one and Icelandic two … I know a lot of vocabularies when I receive e-mails from schools, I try to read them in Icelandic first and then I use google translate, so everyday I get a lot of, may be vocabulary, but still it is difficult for me to speak, because I didn't get much or enough effort in learning the language. But … I can help my daughter, for example, she is in the seventh grade. I can help her with mathematics. I can understand the language of mathematics, the Icelandic. Sometimes my kids tell me, you know more four words. It is difficult for me to have a conversation, longer conversation.

Looking back at the challenges, when she first arrived in Iceland and challenges that she still experienced, Sahar mentioned challenges related to the Icelandic weather, language and the culture. She mangaged to cope with some of the challenges, like the weather but other challenges might stay and take a longer time to overcome. Sahar noted:

> The language was challenging when I first came but now I don't consider it as a challenge. Now it's challenging maybe just the growing of my children because when they are here, I feel like they are in-between two cultures. They are not Icelanders but at the same time they are not Arabs, which is really challenging and I feel like, okay the pressure that they should learn our language, they should learn about our culture.

Sahar also described some tensions and lack of understanding that the family had experienced related to their culture and religion:

> It's Icelandic and Icelandic culture and I advise them … because we are fasting because it was Ramadan and like they find it strange for him, he's twelve years old, to fast, for example, until seven o'clock. And they just came to my house to ask if I'm forcing him on doing this or not. And I advised them that we can teach about it. I can just go to their school, try to talk about it to the teacher or the children to understand because I think the children don't understand what Muslim means, what our religion means, what our culture means. So I just feel that they have to cooperate more with our culture.

Sahar explained that her children had experienced some bullying at school from other immigrants but that the school had responded to the problem. There had also been tensions between the parents and children because of cultural differences. Although she found that the environment was safe and she felt safe with her children there, Sahar noted that she and her husband maintained stricter rules than the Icelandic parents:

> You know, Icelanders are a little bit, Icelandic children are a little bit, not a little bit, a lot free. Like they can, for example, it's sometimes they can use their phones almost the whole day. Which is not allowed for my children, they have this two hours everyday that they can use their phones but they have to do other things. They are always comparing that, okay my friend is sitting six hours on their phones just watching tiktok or doing something like that. Which is, I feel, I just don't understand it, like how their parents just allow them. To spend all this time just on phone or playing playstation or things like that.

When asked about her plans for the future, Sahar said that she wanted to finish her university studies and was hoping to find a good job where her education was appreciated. She noted that moving would be a really big step and that it would be really hard to start again in another place with the children.

In summary, there have been many changes and transitions for the refugee families since their arrival in Iceland five years ago, mainly related to the language as well as the cultural and religious differences. The families have overcome many obstacles in their journey of integration into Icelandic society and describe at the same time various challenges. However, they have actively used the opportunities of furthering their education and social networks in Iceland. The families have high expectations for their children to find skilled employment in the future, and they are anxious for their children to succeed academically. The parents find that their cooperation with the school of their children has developed well. As for their social life and family dynamics, they enjoy their social life, some of them have near and extended families and all of them have continued their relations with their Icelandic support families.

6 Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore various aspects of transitions of four refugee families in Iceland and the intersections of these since their arrival in the country.

The findings of our previous study from 2016-2017 (Ragnarsdóttir & Hama, 2018) revealed a number of challenges for the families. These included the parents' loss of social networks and family, structural discrimination and loss of role and status. The parents faced new situations, responsibilities, and experienced isolation in Iceland. Furthermore, they doubted the quality of education in Iceland as there was lack of information from the schools. However, their children seemed to be happy at school.

Although the parents talk about the difficulties of first coming to Iceland, including loss of role and status (Lloyd, Pilerot & Hultgren, 2017; Richman,

1998), they also express that they have gained new social networks and family which was crucial for starting a new life and development. Challenges that they have faced include that their qualifications have not been recognized in the new country. However, they have adapted well to their new societal context (McCarthy, 2020) and to the various changes that come with living in a new culture and language environment.

The refugee parents in the study emphasize the importance of education in their children's lives and proudly talk about their children's educational attainment. Although some of the schools at first were poorly equipped to recognize and respond to the multiple challenges which children and young people with refugee background face (Block et al, 2014; May & Sleeter, 2010; Nieto, 2010), the children have made good progress and the communication between parents and schools has improved. This is contrary to the findings of Baker and Irwin's (2021) study and McWilliams and Bonet's (2016) study of challenges experienced by refugees in transition in education. These studies, as well as Strang, Baillot and Mignard's (2018) study indicate that the refugees' pre-settlement experiences of instability, insecurity, likely trauma and interrupted education are likely to create challenges in their education, as are their culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, as Alsayed and Wildes (2018) have emphasized, the strengths and resilience of children and youth with refugee background should not be undermined.

None of the parents talk about traumas, often experiences by refugees and which may affect the lives of the children (Richman, 1998; Rousseau, Measham, & Nadeau, 2012), but some describe bullying in schools. They note that the schools have responded quickly to such bullying. Generally, the parents are content with the first five years of their lives in a new country. The parents are happy that they can make a positive contribution to their environment through their active participation in the job market and study, they feel appreciated and less dependent on others, such as support families.

To conclude, further longitudinal research is needed to explore the challenges that the refugee families continue to experience in Icelandic society and education.

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Migrant students' schooling experiences in Ireland: Perspectives from parents

Seun Bunmi Adebayo and Manuela Heinz

1 Introduction

Classrooms are changing across the world due to increased migration. In 2019, 40.9 million people below the age of 19 were born outside their current country of residence (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2019). Several international legal instruments are guiding the rights of migrants, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention of the Rights of a Child (1989), the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights (1966), and the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (2015). Education is one of the fundamental rights for all and is often regarded a levelling ground for all people irrespective of their socio-cultural and economic representations (UNESCO, 2016). However, research internationally has shown that migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, are often denied access to equitable and quality education (UNESCO, 2019; UNHCR, 2016). In the 2015-2016 school year, only 50 per cent of refugee children were enrolled in primary, 22 per cent in secondary schools and just ten per cent of refugees graduated from universities in their host countries (UNHCR, 2016). More than ever, there is an urgent need for education systems to respond to the demands of multilingual and culturally diverse classrooms (UNESCO, 2019).

Research shows that transitional processes significantly shape the lives of migrants and future generations' educational attainment and career opportunities (Feliciano, 2006; Triventi, Vlach and Pini, 2021). Many children of migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds have been observed to experience less academic success at schools in their new countries (Gabrielli and Impicciatore, 2021; Triventi, Vlach and Pini, 2021). Scholars have argued that children from migrant backgrounds navigate multiple identities while being 'denied' access to equitable and quality education due to their minoritized cultural representations (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011).

This chapter explores the experiences of children and their parents from migrant backgrounds with schooling in the Republic of Ireland. Ireland is an interesting case study for exploring transition and integration processes and dynamics because social transformation and cultural and religious diversifi-

cation have been particularly rapid and notable in this jurisdiction. In fact, according to Messina (2009, p. 14), Ireland's rapid transition was "virtually unprecedented in Western Europe". After centuries of net emigration that spread Irish people and their descendants across the globe, Ireland experienced large-scale immigration of non-Irish nationals, comprised of asylum seekers as well as labour migrants, during a time of economic prosperity otherwise known as the 'Celtic Tiger' (1990s until early 2000s) which has resulted in a gradual shift from a largely homogenous Catholic towards an increasingly secular society. The tension between a notably diversified population and Ireland's predominantly denominational (and mostly Catholic) educational system has sparked an ongoing debate about the rights of Ireland's citizens as well as concerns that current school processes will segregate children along religious lines (Faas, Smith and Darmody, 2018). From the Irish census of 2016, the main countries of migration to Ireland include Poland, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Romania, Latvia and Brazil (Central Statistics Office, 2017).

For this chapter, we interchangeably use migrant or immigrant, and we define migrant/immigrant children as children who have either their father or mother born outside of Ireland (OECD, 2007). Following this introduction, we explore key themes from the international and Irish literature about the transitional experiences of migrant children and their families in/to new education systems. We then present the theoretical lens and methodology of the study, followed by a presentation and discussion of our findings.

1.1 Migrant families' transitions in/to new education systems – international and Irish perspectives

Transitioning into the host country's education system and subsequent educational achievement are challenging for many children of migrant backgrounds (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015). Within the United States (US) context, Ngo (2008) highlights that immigrant youth and families are conflicted between dominant US culture and their perceived minority culture. Furthermore, a lack on the part of teachers and schools to recognise the cultural and identity binaries of students from culturally diverse families contributes to cultural clashes and identity confusion among migrant families (Ngo, 2008). Migrants' transitional experiences are shaped by common preconceptions on behalf of members of the host society regarding their identity which often imply power relations between migrants and natives and "characterise immigrants as traditional, patriarchal and resistant to assimilationist demands" (Ngo, 2008, p. 6).

US research exploring educational expectations and achievement of migrant children has shown the strong influence of migrant families' educational attainment and socio-economic status before migration (Feliciano, 2006), with higher pre-migration educational attainments resulting in higher educational aspirations for migrant children. Similarly, in Ireland, McGinnity, Darmody and Murray (2015) found that parental backgrounds and characteristics influence their children's academic success. Further factors that have been shown to influence migrant children's schooling experiences and outcomes include teachers' lacking pedagogical competency to teach in diverse classrooms, language differences between teachers and students (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015; Ní Dhuinn and Keane, 2021), the lack of migrants' identification with host cultures (Sheikh and Anderson, 2018) and "the lack of psychological support available for students and parents who experience racists incidents and bullying" (Stylianou, 2017, p. 997). The relevance of language competency for academic achievement was also demonstrated in a Ghanian study (Kyereko and Faas, 2021) which found that francophone migrant students in an anglophone Ghanian school were placed in lower-age grades due to their poor comprehension of English.

In England, Schneider and Arnot (2018) have argued that low levels of engagement between schools and families contributed to migrant students' poor academic performance, putting them in a disadvantaged position within the school system. The researchers called for schools to develop communication systems that "offer opportunities for dialogue and recognise the value of" cultural diversity (Schneider and Arnot 2018, p. 260). Parental involvement in education contributes to students' motivation and cognitive development (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Paseka and Bryne, 2020). However, some children may be successful at school without their parents' involvement due to "good teaching, positive relationships with other adults, [and] personal resilience…" (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, p. 311). Parental involvement in education could include being part of the school's board of management, participating in school-community collaborations, volunteering in relevant school activities, keeping communication with school stakeholders, and effective involvement in home-based learning (Epstein, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). Benefits of parental involvement in the education of their children include "improved parent-teacher relationships, teacher morale and school climate; improved attendance, attitudes, behaviour and mental health of children, and increased parental confidence, satisfaction and interest in their own education" (Hornby and Lafaele, 2011, p. 37). Unfortunately, research has shown that immigrant parents are often prevented from getting involved in their children's education due to cultural differences and the lack of a common language to communicate with teachers and other educational stakeholders (Antony-Newman, 2018; Öztürk, 2013). Indeed, language has been described as "an instrument

of power" causing difficulties for migrant families as they seek to "negotiate their way through the education system, and to establish themselves as partners in the home-school interface" (Horgan et al., 2021, p. 4).

Research from Sweden supports this argument showing that "minority parents are frequently ignored and marginalised when attempting to speak on behalf of their children, and that they feel what they have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated in their contact with Swedish schools" (Löfgren and Aman, 2020, p. 3). Interestingly, the Swedish study also highlighted that 'deficit attitudes' were also expressed by migrant students who felt that their parents' foreign background influenced their performance in school as they lacked knowledge, for example, with respect to grading systems, and could not provide the necessary support. These students proactively sought effective home-school partnerships as they found themselves caught between their teachers' expectations and parental aspirations (Löfgren and Aman, 2020). Öztürk (2013, p. 16) calls on teachers and school leaders to cultivate environments that support relationship building with migrant families. Such environments need to be "non-threatening places that nurture parents" and allow them to feel comfortable, making them more "enthusiastic to participate in their children's school activity." In addition to efforts by schools and teachers, Gabrielli and Impicciatore (2021) highlight that enhanced policy to support quick migrant family reunification, when required, in host countries can contribute to children from migrant families having better educational outcomes and progression in the labour market. In Southern European countries, they found "that academic performances of immigrants' descendants can be raised through language support and mentoring programmes, positive disciplinary climate, extra-scholastic activities and parental involvement" (Gabrielli and Impicciatore 2021, p. 1).

It is important to highlight that parental choice of schools in Ireland is influenced by several factors, including resources available to schools, availability of spaces for admission and "the multi-denominational character and inclusive ethos of the school" (Darmody, Smyth and McCoy 2012, p. 2). According to Darmody, Smyth and McCoy (2012) parents of migrant backgrounds are more likely to choose to enrol their children in multi-denominational schools and they are more likely to be involved in parent-teacher meetings and develop a relationship with teachers in these schools compared to Catholic schools. As in other contexts, language has been identified as a significant barrier in home-school partnerships in Ireland (Faas, Smith and Darmody, 2019; Horgan et al., 2021; McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015). Support not only for 'host language' but also for 'home language' and 'linguistic diversity' have been recognised as important elements in "facilitating migrant children's integration" (Horgan et al., 2021, p. 12) and sense of belonging in school and wider society. A large study conducted with 711 children in Northern Ireland found that children of Irish Traveller,

Chinese/Asian and European migrant backgrounds experienced lower levels of belonging and inclusion in schools (Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly, 2013). Reflecting the situation in other countries, students from migrant backgrounds have been found to obtain lower academic achievement than native and settled Irish students impacting their labour market opportunities (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015). There is a clear recognition that "the educational success of immigrant children is influenced by their experience in schools of the receiving countries" (McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015, p. 1) and many researchers have called for schools to embrace the culturally diverse values of their students in order to create more inclusive learning environments for all (Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly, 2013; Horgan et al., 2021; McGinnity, Darmody and Murray, 2015). Considering the educational experiences of students from diverse backgrounds, the homogeneity of the teaching profession and the so-called teacher-student 'diversity-gap' have been identified as key issues of debate in research and policy circles in Ireland and internationally (Keane and Heinz, 2016; Heinz and Keane, 2018; Keane, Heinz and McDaid, 2023). Teaching cohorts across Europe continue to mainly represent majority and privileged societal groups. As a result, most students from migrant and/or minority-ethnic backgrounds lack opportunities to engage with and receive support from teachers who are familiar with or from a similar cultural background (Donlevy, Mejerkord and Rajania, 2016; Heinz, Keane and McDaid, 2023).

2 Theoretical framework and methodology

In this study, we borrow ideas from Critical Race Theory (CRT) of education (Brayboy, 2006; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) to explore the influence of race and culture on the experiences of migrant students and their families in/with Irish schools. We see a relationship between CRT and migration in line with Omi and Winant's (1993) conceptualisation of race as fluid and inconclusive, continuously influenced by context and unique societal and cultural values. CRT emerged in the US legal field in the 1970s as a way for minoritised scholars to investigate and address race, racism and class stratification within the US legal and political systems (Monaghan, 1993). It centres counter-stories and allows for a critical and interdisciplinary approach to examine racism and inequity in education systems and society (Ladson-Billings and Tete, 1995). CRT goes beyond seeing race as a conceptualisation of ethnicity and social class tenets but as a significant reflection of existing 'social structure and cultural representation' within a society (Ladson-Billings and Tete, 1995; Omi and Winant, 1993). According to Brayboy (2006, p. 428), CRT takes a strong position as it understands "that racism is

endemic in society and in education, and that racism has become so deeply engrained in society's and schooling's consciousness that it is often invisible."

This study used a qualitative research approach to explore migrant students' schooling experiences from their parents' perspectives. Five focus group discussions were conducted with 20 migrant parents from minority ethnic backgrounds selected through non-random sampling through locally-based Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working with marginalised and minority communities. These NGOs provide migrant communities with the vital support for families to better integrate into Irish society and meet their basic needs.

The lead researcher who also volunteered for these NGOs had built relationships prior to conducting the focus groups with some of the participants. Fourteen of the participants were female, and six were male. They were residents in Ireland for between one and 20 years, and their professions included health professional, students, engineer, IT professional, NGO executive and full-time homemakers. All participants had one or more children enrolled in primary or secondary schools in Ireland. All were of migrant and minority-ethnic (non-White) backgrounds, with 17 parents from Africa and three from Asia. The focus groups took place in public spaces, with a minimum of three and a maximum of six parents in each session. They lasted between 60 to 120 mins and were recorded and transcribed verbatim using pseudonyms for parents and their children.

The focus groups explored the lived experiences of parents and their children with/in the Irish education system. The discussions also examined parents' perspectives on creating culturally inclusive learning environments in Irish schools. The following research question guided the study: What are the schooling experiences of students from migrant families in Irish schools from parents' perspectives?

The NVivo qualitative software programme was used for data coding and analysis. This chapter focuses on themes specifically related to children's schooling experiences in Ireland. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was adopted to analyse and explore themes following the six steps of: 'familiarisation with data; generation of initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; producing the report' (p. 87). Both researchers discussed emerging themes, and after that, themes were refined, defined and finally presented in the findings and discussion sections. Direct quotes from the data will be used throughout the findings section to allow the data to 'speak' for itself (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The following section presents findings under the themes: i) discrimination, bullying and stereotypes, and ii) friendship and happiness.

3 Findings

3.1 Discrimination, bullying and stereotypes

Parents in this study shared several challenges experienced by their children in both Irish primary and secondary schools, including isolation, bullying, discrimination, stereotypes and acceptance.

One parent shared her daughter's experience with bullying and isolation. The daughter was one of a small number of pupils from a minority-ethnic background in her primary school.

> The girl felt so isolated. She didn't get on well with, you know, with the other girls. She felt so isolated. It affected her academics. And I felt that she did not get the support she needed because she kept going back even to the principal. She felt bullied, she was actually bullied, and her grades dropped. She lost interest in school, she lost interest in nearly everything. Because both of them were the only African children in the school. Focus group 1P6

Another parent whose daughter also experienced bullying in school explained how other children made fun of the different texture and style of her hair:

> My kids attended Catholic schools. I think in the beginning, this issue of bullying, she still keeps experiencing even now, I will say so when her mum makes her a new hairstyle, children even from sixth class will try to pull it off just because of her style. They try to make fun out of it. Focus group 1P5

Two other parents spoke about their daughters' experiences with bullying in secondary schools, which resulted in one of them dropping out of school:

> My daughter did not start school from the beginning she joined in third year. So it was very, very hard for her because you know, when you come from Africa, then you can hear the English is different. Everything was different for her. It was very hard so she has to take even extra classes too. Sometimes she was not even talking because she felt different in the class. Sometimes when my daughter comes back from school, she will be crying because she will just say this person did this to me and that. Even till now, it still hard for us sometimes, she says, she doesn't want to go to school. There was a period where on Fridays, she never wanted to go to school and I ask why? It was because there's a girl bullying her, and she doesn't even say it. Focus group 4P3

> She was in secondary school when she was bullied. So she ended up stopping, you know, not going to school. So yeah, it was really tough. Focus group 4P4

Another parent further explained how bullying experienced by most children of culturally diverse backgrounds in Irish schools negatively impacted their

mental health and wellbeing. She shared her close friend's experience with her son, who recently enrolled in a school after relocating to Ireland.

> A friend's experience that her kid was really bullied in the school, it got to a stage that this child was already now been affected psychologically, that he was being bullied within the school premises. Focus group 3P2

In addition, parents also highlighted that teachers and school leaders were complacent in their responses to bullying and isolation in schools, particularly when the victims were students from migrant or culturally diverse backgrounds.

> The child is feeling being left out. It's like most of these children can pull themselves together and play, but once the child (of migrant background) wants to come join in the play, the other kids stylishly ignore and send him away. And this child has been feeling bad, and another time a kid hits him. The child goes back home and reports to his mom, and when the mom reports to the teacher about her child's experiences, the teacher will not do anything about it. Focus group 3P2

> … some teachers will pretend like it (bullying) never happened, you know, and that thing (bullying) will continue when you have gone, you know, so it is not a good thing like for immigrant families. Because kids are very sensitive, they will know when they are being discriminated against. Focus group 3P4

One parent felt that bullying was more experienced by students of culturally diverse backgrounds in secondary schools than in primary schools:

> From my children's experiences, I think bullying is worse in secondary than in primary. Focus group 4P4

Furthermore, parents in this study identified perceived negative stereotypes and 'discrimination' their children faced from their classmates and possibly with teachers. For example, a father from Nigeria shared an incident in his son's school relating to the negative stereotypes against 'Black' students in the school:

> So my son recently told me about an incident that happened in school. I think somebody brought a knife to the school and there was a search in the bags. So they check bags but they only checked few and they were all Black students' bags, so he was not happy. He told me straight away that he never liked this situation because the knife was not found in any of the Black students' bags. The students actually know who brought the knife, and the eventual guilty student was White. Focus group 2P1

Some parents emphasised the impact that misinformation, or even incorrect teaching, was having on stereotypes, and there was evidence of verbal aggression towards students from minority-ethnic backgrounds.

> … the stuff that the children have been taught about Africa is not accurate and more like promoting stereotypes. Focus group 4P4

> My 12-year-old son was able to feel discrimination due to their differences, and he wasn't happy. Also, there was a time when one of the kids called him names as well as the N-word, and they called me to school… Focus group 2P1

3.2 Friendship and happiness

The analysis of the data highlighted the importance of connection, friendship and relationships for students, which parents connected with their overall happiness.

Many parents in this study shared that their children's ability to connect and build friendships with students from other diverse backgrounds contributed to them having a good experience and 'being happy' at school.

> My son loves to go to school, he has friends from different backgrounds. Some of them are Irish, Polish, and some of them from other countries as well. This allows him to interact with people, and he's adjusting well… Focus group 3P3

> My 13-year-old son likes to be in school. Now he's mixed with students of all different backgrounds… happy at school. Focus group 3P4

> For my kids that go to school in [location], they are happy, and when they are on holiday, they just get bored at home and say I want to go back to see my friends, I miss them and all that, they get along with their friends from different backgrounds. Focus group 3P1

However, not all parents reported positively on their children's relationships in school. One Filipino mother in this study compared the relationship-building in culturally diverse schools in Ireland and the Philippines.

> In the Philippines, we have, for example, in schools, students develop friendships with classmates from different backgrounds, and schools provide platforms for this to happen. In my daughter's current school, [location], when students begin schooling, their classmates remain the same, and ultimately no new friendships are formed. And I think the school promotes this situation. Focus group 2P4

Another parent shared:

> For Jane, while she was in primary school, the relationship (between her and teacher) was non-existent. Focus group 1P6

Recognising the importance of relationships and friendships, many parents felt that teachers and schools should intentionally encourage friendships between students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Some parents suggested that teachers could use classroom management strategies, such as seating positions, to ensure students from diverse backgrounds integrate and build new friendships.

> Teachers should ensure that students mix and try to develop new friendships with students from different backgrounds. Teachers can maybe work on seating arrangements; they can mix the seating arrangement. Focus group 2P4

4 Discussion and conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter have highlighted some transitional challenges confronting migrant families as they navigate the Irish education system, including children's experiences of isolation, bullying and stereotypes, complacent teacher attitudes and, for some, difficulties in building friendships with children from different backgrounds. Similar findings from other studies recently conducted by Horgan et al. (2021) and Ni Dhuinn and Keane (2021) have also highlighted racism and discrimination experienced by newcomer and minority ethnic students within the Irish education system. Furthermore, findings from other contexts such as the US, Sweden, England, Cyprus and Southern European countries have also confirmed that migrant families and their children experienced discrimination and a lack of cultural acceptance in their host countries' education systems (Gabrielli and Impicciatore, 2021; Löfgren and Aman, 2020; Ngo, 2008; Schneider and Arnot, 2018; Stylianou, 2017).

An interesting finding from our data is the connection between friendship and happiness for students from migrant families in Irish schools. Parents in this study shared that their children were "happy at school" when they could form relationships with students from other socio-cultural backgrounds. However, in three focus groups, parents highlighted that Irish schools and teachers needed to do more to promote relationship building and tolerance between students in culturally diverse schools. Studies have shown that students developing inter-ethnic friendships and relationships in culturally diverse schools will contribute to positive learning outcomes, improved sense of belonging and fulfilment in schools (Horgan et al., 2021). Students' sense of belonging has been identified as fundamental to their development and general wellbeing (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs identified and explained belonging as crucial to self-development and fulfilment. According to Goodenow (1993, p. 80), students' sense of belonging in schools can be defined as a "psychological membership in the school or classroom, that is, the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school environment." A recent study conducted by Baysu et al. (2021) in Belgium showed that schools' cultural diversity approaches culminated in quality student-teacher relationships and a positive school experience for students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Also, students'

recognition of their schools "as more equal and multicultural" led to better relationship building between minority and majority students (Baysu et al., 2021, p. 382). From our findings and similar results in other contexts, we posit that schools and teachers can promote values that enable migrant or minority ethnic students to be included and not excluded in school processes (Baysu et al., 2021; Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly, 2013).

Our data has provided insights into the transitional challenges faced by migrant families and their children in educational access, support and provision in Ireland. These challenges are not peculiar to the Irish context. Evidence shows that migrant families in other countries in the Global North and Global South encounter similar challenges (Baysu et al., 2021; Gabrielli and Impicciatore, 2021; Kyereko and Faas, 2021; Ngo, 2008). We, therefore, argue for specific support programmes and policies to assist migrant families and their children as they settle in Ireland. For example, programmes geared at community integration and recognition of the diverse cultural values and practices of new migrant families can help families to settle and get established in their host communities.

Further, schools can go beyond a tokenistic approach to embracing the cultural diversity of students from migrant backgrounds by developing activities that foster greater participation of migrant parents in their children's education and supporting teachers with the skills necessary for culturally inclusive teaching and learning in classrooms. This will help to move towards more equitable and quality education for all and, in particular, a more authentic sense of belonging for students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Importantly, the Irish government needs to support the successful implementation of migrant support policies at national, local and school levels (Horgan et al., 2021; Ni Dhuinn and Keane, 2021).

In conclusion, the findings presented in this chapter provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of migrant families in the Irish education system. While the critical role of parents in education is emphasised in numerous education policies (Jezierski and Wall, 2019), minority-ethnic parents' perspectives have rarely featured in education research (Antony-Newman, 2019; Gonzales and Gabel, 2017). Our findings can thus inform policies and new educational practices to provide tailored support for migrant families transitioning between various education systems.

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Home and away for forty years: Transitional processes of Vietnamese refugees journey seeking liberty in Iceland

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1 Introduction

The 30 years old civil war between the North and the South of Vietnam ended on the last days of April of 1975. It was also the beginning of the South Vietnamese refugee exodus. By 1979, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that over a million South Vietnamese labelled as the petit bourgeoisie, small business owners but earned more than the manual labour workers, were pushed out of their homes and relocated into new economic zones. Their children in higher education were barred from attending, and former soldiers were placed in re-education camps and detention centres, where many died (Cutts et al. 2000). As a result, hundreds and thousands of people risked their lives and fled the country by boats into the Pacific Ocean, giving rise to the term "boat people." In 1979, at the behest of the Icelandic government, the Icelandic Red Cross (IRC) helped resettle 34 Vietnamese refugees in Reykjavik (Harðardóttir, Jónsdóttir and Jónsson 2005). As a welfare state, Iceland provided them with health care, social services, education, language instructions, and assistance in finding jobs and training with the assistance of the IRC (Guðmundsdóttir 2000).

In recent decades, the languages, cultures, religions, and population have become increasingly diverse in Iceland. The ratio of non-Icelandic citizens to the total population was 2.6 percent in 2000 and 13.5 percent in 2020 (Statistics Iceland 2020). Following the trend, the number of Vietnamese immigrants was 845 (Statistics Iceland 2020). The diversification of the population is reflected at all school levels. A fundamental principle of the Icelandic education system is that everyone must have equal access to education irrespective of sex, economic status, geographic location, religion, disability, and cultural or social background (Government of Iceland n.d.).

This paper reports on six Vietnamese refugees' linguistic, cultural, social, and educational experiences and perceptions for 40 years. The study is grounded in theories related to intercultural education and multiculturalism. Such theories emphasise the value and importance of the inclusiveness of

diversity and equal opportunity for all regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, or other aspects of personal identity.

Qualitative research was the method of unfolding the implicit language and the tool for analysing the data. The use of semi-structured interviews as an approach yielded rich data to construct the participants' perspectives and capture their personal experiences within a new cultural context (Lichtman 2013). It aims to map the transitional stages of their refugee journey and their integration process during their 40 years in Iceland.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Acculturation, multiculturalism, and multicultural education

Many refugees flee their homeland because of tragedies of war, disasters, and poverty with the assumption that the choice of returning is not an option. Refugees, according to Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a person who

> [O]wing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political option, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (United Nations 1951)

Nevertheless, the term refugee needs to be critically discussed: refugees are not a homogeneous mass but differ by countries of origin from different parts of the world.

The refugees are considered to have similar experiences as the immigrants after arriving in a host country since they need to integrate into the new society where the culture and language are often unknown to them.

According to Sam and Berry (2010), acculturation is a cultural and psychological transformation immigrants, and refugees encounter when resettling in another country. The transformation happens because their culture comes into contact with other cultures in the host country, reciprocally influencing each other. And through people's negotiations and sharing of values, traditions, worldviews, and social and political relationships, culture shifts over time (May 2005, Nieto 2010). However, it is critical to understand that cultural adaptation is unique between individuals and groups because they are

diverse. Therefore, their reaction and interaction with the new context and environment during their acculturation are distinct (Sam and Berry 2010). Individual acculturation is contingent on the cultural value system, organisation, and relations in which an individual grows up (Kalantzis and Cope 1999).

Alba and Nee (2003), in their "new assimilation theory," articulate assimilation as the development of "boundary spanning and altering" a variety of cultural and social differences between ethnic groups (Alba and Nee 2003:59). However, they argue that the institutional and cultural core of the host country remains non-negotiable to refugees (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Their transitional processes result from the combination of structures and practices they encounter in a new country alongside their behaviour and adaptations of their social, cultural, and educational background resources (Brettell and Hollifield 2015).

Multiculturalism results from different individuals' cultural value systems interacting and learning from each other in a society. The learning contexts for developing a multicultural mindset are all around, including our family circle, neighbourhoods, workplace, country, and places we visit (Parekh 2006). Thus, Parekh (2006) construes that we are "culturally embedded" (p. 187), and multiculturalism is a condition of human freedom for our lives can be enriched by meeting other cultures.

Critical multiculturalism has, over the recent years, challenged liberal approaches to multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism has offered a complete understanding of oppression and institutionalisation of unequal power relations in education by combining and developing various critical theoretical threads such as anti-racist education, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy. The field of critical multiculturalism has examined many challenges in modern societies, such as the cultural rights of minority groups and, on the other hand, the fact that education has developed about the defined needs of a particular majority or majority (May and Sleeter 2010, Parekh 2006) and is, therefore, an essential theoretical focus in the current project.

Multicultural education is an educational philosophy that seeks to celebrate diversity and foster equal opportunity for all members of society. Critical theorists warn against educational transformations that claim to address problems of inequality and inequity. Claims should be scrutinised to ensure that the proposed changes truly address inequality within academic institutions and are not merely another adjustment to serve the interest of the dominant culture or class. Curriculum content that makes the mother tongue and home culture relevant to students of diverse backgrounds validates the value of their knowledge and encourages them to exercise their agency (Gay 2018). Education is the development of a whole individual far beyond academic achievement and includes "intellectual, academic, ethical and political di-

mensions, all of which are developed in concert with one another" (Gay 2018:52).

2.2 Vietnamese refugees in the Nordic countries

Many Vietnamese refugees settled at a similar time in other Nordic countries as the refugees in Iceland. Narratives about Vietnamese boat people's experiences were among the most tragic of all time. The trauma of hunger and thirst witnessed or subjected to rapes and abductions, the fear and desperations when their boat's engine broke down, lack of fuel or loss of direction, and piracy affected their ability to work and their quality of life for many years (Hauff and Vaglum 1993). Although the refugees were reported to be among the most successfully integrated non-western immigrants (Olstad 2009), they were primarily blue-collar workers. Tran's (2015) study of Vietnamese students in upper secondary school in Iceland revealed that they lacked support, were perceived as deficient in language and culture, and their previous educational knowledge was not cognised. Still, a few succeeded in becoming entrepreneurs in the food industry. They overcame many obstacles, including language and discrimination, and were always ready to learn and try (Hauff and Vaglum 1993, Viljámsson 1989). Nordic languages were the barrier to many of them since they have a different language system to Vietnamese (Adelman 1983, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2019). Vietnamese is in the Austroasiatic family grammar, syntax, and phonology are unrelated to the Romance and Germanic Language of Western Europe (Tran 2015). The majority of the refugees expressed their gratitude for the welcome they received to rebuild their lives in safe, secure, and peaceful societies and their satisfaction with how their lives have taken shape (Guðmundsdóttir 2000, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2019).

3 Methodology

As a culturally responsive method that valued and respected the refugees' cultural background and knowledge, qualitative research was used to elicit and capture their personal experiences and gain insight into their lives (Nodelman 2013).

The data was collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with six refugees in the group who came to Iceland in 1979 as adults. There were five males and one female between the ages of 55 and 70. Only one

female gave an interview because it was considered a male role. One of the two authors is of Vietnamese origin; thus, the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, giving the participants the freedom to tell their stories meaningfully. The interviews were guided by a sequence of themes (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). They were transcribed and analysed in Vietnamese before being coded and thematised in English using Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis approach. The six themes that emerged from the clusters of the different codes narrated the refugees' language, culture, and transitional education processes. They included the refugees' background, hope for rebuilding their lives abroad, acculturation strategies to integrate into Icelandic society, sense of belonging, relationships, and ways of upholding the Vietnamese language and cultural values, and their sense of belonging and fulfilment after 40 years.

Besides the researcher and the participants being of the exact origin, they also arrived in Iceland simultaneously, giving her access as an insider. Thus, the participants expressed themselves openly, which yielded 913 minutes of rich and thick data (Lichtman 2013). Nevertheless, there are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider. An insider is equipped with insights that able them to interpret the inner meanings of the data that otherwise could be overlooked. But an insider can be too subjective to be critical of the data because of their assumption of having shared the similarity with the participants (Couture, Zaidi and Maticka-Tyndale 2012). The challenge of researching a small ethnic group is reporting the data collected. The participants were very concerned about the risk of their private life being exposed. Therefore, before the interviews were granted, ethical issues were explained, such as using pseudonyms; the data was stored at a secure university drive and was only used for scientific study. This was the research limitation since the interviews yielded meaningful data, some essential data was excluded to protect the participants' identities. For this same reason, participants' information such as gender, ages, workplaces, vocations, and education linked to individual experiences were averted.

4 Findings

In this section, the narratives of the transitional processes of the six individuals who originated as refugees from Vietnam and became citizens of Iceland are described and discussed. The main goal shared by all the Vietnamese refugees was acquiring freedom and liberty. The struggle for this quality of life was described as a process requiring sacrifices, courage, and suffering. But the participants reported satisfying and content life forty years later was the payoff. The refugees' transitional processes started with their life-

threatening boat trip, experiences of thirst, hunger, and uncertainty while drifting in the Pacific Ocean, instilling a strong sense of the value of life. After arriving in Iceland, acculturation was complex, particularly because of significant differences between Vietnam and Iceland in climate, language, culture, and geographical distance. A common acculturation strategy was accepting assimilation as a way of life, although participants described their Vietnamese identity as 'in their blood.' Nevertheless, their children under age 15 (upon arrival) went to school and adapted to their new life but slowly lost their heritage language.

4.1 Seeking freedom and liberty

The six participants fled their home country out of fear of persecution. This was connected to being a soldier in the previous regime, the increasingly difficult living conditions, and being dislocated from their homes and placed into new economic zones.

The Cao family, with young children, embarked on the journey because it became more challenging to work on their land. Every year their rice harvest, besides a small amount for feeding his family, was taken by the government in exchange for a limited number of tickets to trade for necessities, such as flour, sugar, petroleum, and materials for clothes. Everything was scarce in the country and could only be bought with tickets in government-run stores.

Tài and his family had nothing to live on in their city after the communist regime confiscated their home and business and branded them the petit bourgeoisie. They were transported to the new economic zone in the countryside, where they were given a bare piece of land to restart their life empty-handed. Like many others, they were expected to build their house and work with minimum equipment. Tài expounded:

> We were delighted when the war finally ended. We no longer needed to be worried about being drafted to go to war. However, a few months later, a group of men with guns invaded our house. They sealed everything in our home.

Seeking freedom and liberty was the shared reason the participants had for seeking refuge, as Hải explained:

> I left for liberty. I forsake communism; therefore, this was the first thing I thought about. After running away from communism, I would go anywhere where there was freedom and liberty.

The refugees' experiences on their way to their new home where they could find freedom and liberty were full of terror and suffering. Nữ's boat was

attacked by pirates seven times, and when it arrived in the fjord of Thailand, they had to wait for seven days with uncertainty about whether they were allowed to embark. Besides experiencing the fear of pirates, they shared the experience of thirst, hunger, and watching children die during the journey. Hải's feeling of extreme hunger after five days of having no food or drink was still vivid after 40 years.

Nevertheless, whether they were on the winning or losing side of the war, the Vietnamese were happy that it ended. But it was not as simple as they had hoped. The peace they thought would have been replaced with the persecution they had to endure. As a result, they embarked on a dangerous journey across the ocean to search for freedom and liberty.

4.2 Iceland, the unknown land, and the beginning

Iceland was a faraway and unknown land to the refugees until they were offered to resettle in the country and make it their home after months of uncertainty and hardship in the refugee camp. Băng đảo, the Vietnamese name now used for Iceland, was added to the Vietnamese language during this resettlement. The meaning of *băng* is 'ice,' and *đảo* is an 'island.' Many in the group mistook Iceland for Ireland because they were close to pronunciation and written words.

Their first views of Iceland from their bus ride from Keflavik to Reykjavik and their first years in Iceland were described as bare, cold, gloomy, and inanimate. Tài jokingly compared it to the new economic zone in Vietnam. Barren Iceland, with few people and trees, with fields of lava and dark in the winter, was the opposite of a crowded Vietnam, with tree-lined streets giving shades from the sun all year round. Most of them were disappointed and thought they had made the wrong decision to choose this land. Cao, a farmer in Vietnam, reflected on his thought:

> During the drive from the airport to Reykjavík, I looked around and around and saw no trees. I thought to myself. "How do I farm here? I can't plant any vegetables or anything else. It looks like I am going into a new economic zone…How would we live?" [Cao laughed at his joke].

Shortly after their arrival, eager to restart their life, the refugees requested that IRC help them find jobs. The males of the four families and the bachelors began working in fish factories. As time went by, they had various manual jobs before finding jobs that became permanent. Some still work while others are retired. Their present jobs include interpreting and translating services, mechanics, specialists in different industries and factories, and restaurant cooks and owners.

Iceland was a land that none of the refugees knew about until they arrived. Their first impression of Iceland was that it appeared too barren and isolated for their souls since they came from a crowded, full-of-life city like Saigon. They were unsure how to survive, but they slowly adapted from being industrious and innovative and groundbreaking people. They were the first to introduce Vietnamese and Chinese food to locals and ran successful Asian restaurants.

4.3 Icelandic learning, education, and the working life

After settling in, the Icelandic Red Cross organised Icelandic classes for adults, and children were registered for school. The first Icelandic course started in January 1980 and lasted six months. The refugees learned Icelandic for half a day and worked the other half. In addition, once working, this became a priority for many, even though some wished they had more time to learn Icelandic. After a few sessions, the group with limited education and unfamiliar with a Western language stopped attending. Nữ got lost on her way home by bus returning from an Icelandic class on a cold winter day in January. She relived the experience:

> Another mother and I attended classes for two or three weeks. On our way back from an Icelandic class, we took the bus. The January wind was horrible. But we needed to know which bus stop and street to get off. We sat on the bus that went around and around. You see, we could not read. We still cannot read. We were disappointed. We did not learn anything but yes and no.

Of the six participants, only one reported completing the six months of the Icelandic course offered. The majority learned Icelandic through communication with Icelanders daily and at work. Some speak after decades of living in Iceland, while others struggle to make themselves understood.

Tài's opinion about learning to read Icelandic was not complex since the reading technique of sounding out the alphabet was similar to Vietnamese. However, for Tài and many others, the grammar was a "headache." Their strategy for learning Icelandic was to learn sentences by heart. Tài laughed and explained:

> I could not retain the grammar. I wrote down what I heard and learned the sentences. But if you talk to me about feminine and masculine, I am a blind man– [Tài laughed heartily].

Informal Icelandic learning provided the refugees with a communication tool but did not help them advance in their jobs. The large majority stayed in the same positions for four decades. They were entrusted with more responsibili-

ties because of their industrious, trustworthy character and seniority, but they did not climb the ladder. They expressed regrets about missed opportunities when they could not take advantage of continuing education in their vocation due to their limited language proficiency. Manh reflected on his situation:

> They [the management at the company] observed that I could learn and work well; they offered me to go abroad for vocational development. But first, I needed to learn another language. I tried, but I couldn't. I could not even learn Icelandic well, never mind about another language.

They also discussed the lack of understanding when their education in Vietnam was not recognised. Hải retold his situation:

> My high school diploma was the only thing I brought with me when I escaped. After coming here, I presented the people with my diploma in Vietnamese. There was no such a thing as translation at the time. It was only being flipped back and forth. We were refugees. They did not recognise our diploma.

In this quote, Hải explained that his diploma was not recognised because it was in Vietnamese, and officials could not read the document. Another reason was the unworthiness and powerlessness of being a refugee. To prove himself, Hải was one of the very few from the group who continued his education. He called his bittersweet experiences during his quest "the good and bad in life." He had to alter his dream because of the mismatch between his counsellor's advice and his preferences. Hải defined his counsellor as his very good friend. Thus, his advisory words carried weight. Although the decision to follow the advice was his, as a Vietnamese, his gratitude for his friend was worth even more. Hải recounted:

> I was advised to go to a technical school. I had to finish studying there first before continuing to engineer. I was happy with this plan since I wanted to become an electrician. But it turned out to be that my advisor was a mechanic. He told me, "why don't you learn mechanics and forget about electricity." He was very good to me and a very good friend, so I followed him.

Mạnh described the present job that he has held for the last forty years as his home. There have been a lot of transitions during this time, both within the company and within himself. His work at the company in the early '80s was mainly hard, manual labour. He pushed heavy carts of materials between places, sometimes over dozens of kilometres all day long. Mạnh attributed the hardship to the lack of Icelandic and understanding of Icelandic culture:

> When I started the job, I didn't speak the language; I didn't know the culture, and I didn't know the people. I didn't know anything. It would have been different if I had been literate in the language. I had only myself to blame

The distance between a country in South-East Asia close to the equator and a Nordic country close to the Arctic circle was immense. The distance also

signified the vast differences in the climate, language, and cultural gaps that were insurmountable barriers for refugees at the beginning and for many years to come.

4.4 Growing roots

During the first few years, many refugees thought Iceland would only be a temporary resettlement country. They looked outwards to other destinations, joining their relatives in the United States, France, and Canada. To their surprise, moving to another country was not an easy option after growing accustomed to the Icelandic way of life. After travelling far and wide, they concluded that Iceland was the best place. Restarting life in another country was difficult. Thông, after two years in Iceland, visited his family abroad, intending to move there. After finding himself a job and preparing to marry and settle in the country, he discovered Iceland was where he wanted to live.

> After three months, I suddenly missed Iceland. So, I told my brother, "I am going back to Iceland. Life is too complicated and artificial for me. Iceland is peaceful; I don't have to be afraid of anyone. There is no military, no guns.

As time went by, the natural development of human life evolved. The refugees had decisions to make. They knew they had to learn the Icelandic way of living; they had to gain trust and assimilate willingly. Hải cited a Vietnamese proverb to justify his decision:

> Nhập gia tùy tục, nhập quốc tùy phong [when in Rome, do as the Romans do]. There is nothing else I can do. To be in Iceland, I had to integrate. That's mandatory. If I wanted to survive, I had to.

Mạnh was proud of his job, which he has held through perseverance, ingratiation, and diligence to gain trust among his Icelandic colleagues. He firmly believed trust was the keyword to success. He said:

> I worked twice as much as everyone else. I did everything; there was nothing that I said no to because I did not feel I was trusted. I needed to be industrious at work to ingratiate my manager to gain his trust. It took a very long time. I think it isn't easy for people to entrust you with different jobs. I believe it must have taken me up to 20 years.

The refugees became immersed in work, establishing restaurants, learning Icelandic, and getting second education. The bachelors got married and built families. They participated fully in society.

4.5 Struggling to maintain the Vietnamese language and culture

Icelandic society became increasingly diverse and 'multicultural' at the beginning of the 21st century when larger waves of immigrants began arriving (Tran 2015). It was not until then that buzz words such as *heritage language* and *cultural diversity* gained traction. Unfortunately, the children who came to Iceland in 1979 and those born at the end of the 20th century had very limited or no support for maintaining the Vietnamese language and culture. In addition, their parents needed to work long hours, further limiting exposure to their heritage language. Hải' s disappointment was deep as he looked back into the past. He started the interview by expressing his feeling about this loss of language among his children:

> My shortcoming with my children in the previous marriage was that I could not speak Vietnamese with them. I was often sad about that. The fact was that seven days a week, I worked all seven days for over ten years. I didn't have the time to talk to them. When they spoke to me, I quickly answered them in Icelandic to finish the conversation so I could sleep and restart the next day again. That was my only regret.

Similarly, Nữ lamented generational language loss when asked about her children. She spoke

> I spoke Vietnamese to them, but they didn't answer me. I used whatever little Icelandic I had to talk to them to get some kind of response. As a result, there isn't any Vietnamese left.

Some of the participants' spouses in their second marriage were of Vietnamese background. They reported that children in their second marriage spoke Vietnamese and were more connected to the Vietnamese culture because their spouses had limited Icelandic and had many relatives in Iceland. However, it was not a given that refugees would also speak Vietnamese to these children. Some of them carried on speaking Icelandic. As Thông said:

> The two younger children speak Vietnamese to their mother, but they speak Icelandic to me. It just came naturally that way…But my children said: "I am proud to be half Vietnamese."

A natural way to participate in the life of society is to build families and raise children. The biggest challenge for some refugees was passing on the Vietnamese language, customs, and culture to their children. Icelandic society's lack of multicultural awareness made the environment less conducive for parents to effectively teach and practise Vietnamese cultural heritage with their children. Nevertheless, some of their children recognised their Vietnamese background and were proud of it.

4.6 Second homeland and native land

Forty years is a long time. Half of the six participants have already retired from their jobs. Some have gone through marriages and divorces and have children and grandchildren. Their life as refugees taught them the importance of self-respect, self-reliance, and resilience to rebuild a life away from their native land. These were characteristics they also tried to foster in their children. Hải told his children about the hunger he experienced during his escape to help them understand why they need to appreciate things in life and not take everything for granted. Thông was determined to instil self-reliance in his children because he believed this characteristic saved him. When he was asked about the challenges he encountered in Iceland, he explained:

> I left home a long time ago. I became self-reliant; thus, I did not encounter many difficulties [living in Iceland]…when my children fell, only when they could no longer help themselves that I came to their rescue.

Hải, like many other refugees who settled in Iceland, worked hard to gain respect for themselves and for Iceland, the country that took them in. He explained:

> Without self-respect, one is nothing. This was about my inferiority complex as a foreigner. I thought people were not pleased with us because we were perceived as a burden to society. We must prove to them that we are not a burden. We went to school like them. We went to work like them. We paid tax like them. We must endeavour.

Looking back, the refugees considered having good fortune in life when they thought of their satisfying jobs, their children's success, and their abilities to help others who were less fortunate than them in Vietnam. They accepted Iceland as their second home. Hải eloquently expressed the heart and soul of the refugees:

> I have many dreams, but the importance is that I am content. My life is minimal. It looks small, but I have travelled a long, challenging road. I accept Iceland as my second home, but my roots are in Vietnam. I can live here; I am agreeable with the people, the culture, the language, all of them. But if we talk about my native land, then it cannot be. How can it be? How can we transport our native land? It contains everything, from our culture, tradition, and childhood to the food we eat and the language we speak. Everything. We cannot change that.

Their characters, values, and worldviews became grounded in their refugee experiences. These, in turn, influenced how they educated their children. After 40 years of living in Iceland, the refugees grew accustomed to the country and embraced it as their second home. Just as water always returns to its source, nước chảy về nguồn, in Vietnamese, the refugees retained their Vietnamese heritage inside and out, 'in their blood.'

5 Discussion and conclusion

The findings indicate that the Vietnamese refugees have settled and adapted well to Icelandic society and are active participants despite many challenges throughout the years in Iceland, such as a very different culture, language, and climate. They have managed to negotiate and share values, traditions, and worldviews, as May (2005) and Nieto (2010) have discussed. Their persistence and resilience have facilitated their acculturation (Sam and Berry 2010). These findings are similar to other Nordic countries (Hauff and Vaglum 1993, Olstad 2009). However, the lack of multicultural awareness and interaction (Parekh 2006) in Icelandic society has challenged the Vietnamese' pursuit of maintaining their cultural heritage and language. Despite this, some of their children recognise their Vietnamese background with pride. Since the arrival of the Vietnamese refugees in Iceland, they have had to adapt to the host culture, in line with how Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that the institutional and cultural core of the host country remains non-negotiable to refugees. The transitional processes of the Vietnamese refugees result from the combination of structures and practices they have encountered in Iceland as well as their behaviour and adaptations of their social, cultural, and educational background resources (Brettell and Hollifield 2015). As Parekh (2006) discusses, a context of multiculturalism where different individuals' cultural value systems interact and learn from each other had not developed in Icelandic society when the Vietnamese refugees arrived. The acculturation of the refugees was one-sided. Critical multiculturalism is an essential tool for exploring the experiences of the Vietnamese refugees in Iceland as it offers an understanding of the institutionalisation of unequal power relations in education (May and Sleeter 2010).

Despite equal access for everyone being the Icelandic fundamental principle, Vietnamese refugees experience exclusion regarding their education. Education in Iceland at the time was defined by the needs of the majority (May and Sleeter 2010, Parekh 2006). Multicultural education pedagogically designed to teach students to and through their strengths was non-existent (Gay 2018). The young refugees' previous knowledge was not recognised, they received no language support to further their education, and they got insufficient counselling to realise their learning goals for their future (Tran 2015). The Icelandic course was neither level-appropriate nor culturally responsive (Gay 2018). As a result, their purpose in life was unreached, missing out on opportunities to advance in their vocation, learning Icelandic appropriately to better function in Iceland.

The Vietnamese refugees' children were immersed in Icelandic culture, which resulted in the absence of the Vietnamese language and culture in the lives of many and, in some cases, loss of heritage. This has resulted in regrets

of the Vietnamese, apparent in the quotes from the interviews, in spite of their satisfaction with their life.

The Vietnamese refugees' assimilation process in Iceland demonstrates a clear example of the assimilation theory of Portes and Rumbaut (2001). Icelandic society has a lot to learn from the 40 years' experiences of the Vietnamese population. Loss of language and culture is an unsustainable sacrifice for those who arrive on the shores of Iceland. There has been and continues to be a need to support the existing diversity of cultural and linguistic heritages present in society. These valuable experiences can be built on to develop a more welcoming and supportive multicultural society and education.

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Perspectives on Transitions in Refugee Education

Refugees face transitions in their lives: at an individual, a social and a cultural level. This book covers various aspects of these transitions and their intersections with educational experiences. Studies from different country contexts show the complex relationships between individual, culture, society and institutions. Examining these relationships and experiences during transitional processes aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the different types of transitions in the context of refugee education, which may lead to an improvement of support structures in the future.

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